

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 3 May 2012

(Extract from book 6)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Battin and Mr McCurdy. (*Council*): Mr Leane, Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess, Mr Foley, Mr Noonan and Mr Shaw. (*Council*): Mrs Peulich.

Education and Training Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Ms Miller and Mr Southwick. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr and Ms Tierney.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Ryall and Mrs Victoria. (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Bull, Ms Duncan, Mr Pandazopoulos and Ms Wreford. (*Council*): Mr Koch.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Mrs Bauer, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McGuire and Mr Wakeling. (*Council*): Mrs Coote and Ms Crozier.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Graley, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Drum, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, and Mr P. Davis.

Law Reform Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Carbines, Ms Garrett, Mr Newton-Brown and Mr Northe. (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Graley, Ms Hutchins and Ms McLeish. (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Ondarchie.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Hennessey, Mr Morris and Mr Scott. (*Council*): Mr P. Davis, Mr O'Brien and Mr Pakula.

Road Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr Perera, Mr Tilley and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Mr Elsbury.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr Drum.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella and Mr Watt. (*Council*): Mr O'Brien and Mr O'Donohue.

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Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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The Hon. P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank ⁴	Broadmeadows	ALP
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Brumby, Mr John Mansfield ¹	Broadmeadows	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
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Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Newton-Brown, Mr Clement Arundel	Prahran	LP
Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Noonan, Mr Wade Mathew	Williamstown	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan ²	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Tarneit	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pandazopoulos, Mr John	Dandenong	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Lowan	Nats	Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane	Melbourne	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Powell, Mrs Elizabeth Jeanette	Shepparton	Nats
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
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Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
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Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Keilor	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wreford, Ms Lorraine Joan	Mordialloc	LP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Ballarat West	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP			
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP			

¹ Resigned 21 December 2010

² Elected 24 March 2012

³ Resigned 27 January 2012

⁴ Elected 19 February 2011

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Thursday, 3 May 2012

The SPEAKER (Hon. Ken Smith) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

Ms Campbell — At the outset I acknowledge that all rulings from the Chair must be accepted without dissent. This occurred yesterday during question time when one by one six opposition members were removed from the chamber. Having examined yesterday's *Hansard* this morning, I wish to raise a point of order. As you are no doubt aware, Speaker, standing order 1 refers to the relationship of our standing orders with other orders and practices of the Westminster system. Standing order 58(1)(a) requires that answers to questions be direct, factual and succinct.

Yesterday during question time new precedents were set, and in order for us as members to understand which particular practices of the Westminster system will continue to apply to future sittings of the Legislative Assembly and which will not, members of the opposition as well as acting chairs, would greatly appreciate a reissuing of *Rulings from the Chair* with all the current rulings.

There is now little clarity in relation to references to precedent. This Parliament, the gallery and the members of the public who are watching the webcast need clarity on how the 57th Parliament's rulings bear upon, firstly, standing order 1 and any semblance of consistency with the Westminster system, and secondly, the application of standing order 58(1)(a) and its consistency of application. For those such as me who have experience with the previous and historical application in this house of the Westminster tradition, it is now blatantly apparent that we need a reprint of *Rulings from the Chair* based upon your rulings, Speaker, in this 57th Parliament.

Yesterday, as a distraction from the embarrassment of very senior ministers flailing in their answers on the need for government jobs — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members of the house will come to order. Is the member reaching the stage where she is about to conclude?

Ms Campbell — Yes; very soon, Speaker. Yesterday we witnessed six opposition members being ordered to leave the chamber as a distraction from the embarrassment of senior ministers flailing in their answers.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have heard enough of the point of order. Alterations are made to *Rulings from the Chair* on a reasonably regular basis, and copies are brought to the house. *Rulings from the Chair* will be reprinted when there are enough new rulings, and copies will be brought to the house as normally occurs.

Ms Campbell — Can I finish my point of order, Speaker?

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Campbell — I cannot hear you, Speaker. I can finish? I put it to you that it is imperative that as a matter of urgency we have an update of *Rulings from the Chair* so that we can — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member to be seated. I have already said that *Rulings from the Chair* comes out on a reasonably regular basis when there have been enough alterations to the rulings to allow that to happen. The member has raised a point of order; I have listened to what she has said. I am telling the member that *Rulings from the Chair* will be reprinted in the normal way.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Notices of motion

The SPEAKER — Order! I have some comments about the content of notices of motion. Members on both sides of the house have over a period of time raised points of order about the length and content of notices of motion. Yesterday I spent considerable time with the clerks reviewing notices of motion, including notices given in the past few sitting weeks. I am concerned about an increasing pattern of notices setting out the terms of the motion and then setting out a number of points in support of the motion. The effect of this practice is two-fold: it can be difficult to make sense of the notice and it leads to unnecessarily long notices of motion that waste the time of the house. Therefore I make the following ruling to address the matter.

Notices should be no longer than 50 words. It is clear to me from reviewing notices of recent weeks that members can set out a proposition for the house's consideration in less than 50 words. There are two exceptions to this that I will address at the end of this ruling.

When members give notice of a motion they are advising the house of the terms of a debate to occur at a later time. A motion must be a proposition framed from

the house's perspective which is capable of being debated and voted on. The house must be able to agree to or defeat the question 'that the motion be agreed to'.

Notices must be of a single sentence. This may include an enumerated list where there are multiple elements to that sentence. For example, a motion may seek to note the effect of A and B, which is still a single proposition set out in a single sentence. Notices must not contain argument in support of the substance of the motion. Such comments should be left until the house debates the motion. This subject was covered in the members procedural seminar on 26 May 2011.

There are two exceptions to the requirement for notices to be fewer than 50 words. These are for notices that (a) establish, appoint members to or refer matters to parliamentary committees, or (b) in the opinion of the Chair are of a procedural nature.

This morning notices of motion will be heard as they normally would, but as from the next sitting day notices will come under the new ruling.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 13 to 27 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Anti-Cancer Council Victoria — Report 2011

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Amendment to Keno Licence under s 6A.3.23

Police Integrity, Office of — Review of Victoria Police use of 'stop and search' powers — Ordered to be printed

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — Revocation of Code of Practice for the Welfare of Rodeo and Rodeo School Livestock in Victoria (Revision 1)

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under s 15 in relation to SRs 27, 28.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 22 May 2012.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Portarlington Primary School: funding

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — The community of Portarlington is bitterly disappointed at the failure of the current government to include funding for the redevelopment of Portarlington Primary School in this year's budget. There is not even an indication in the budget that the relatively modest \$70 000 needed to finalise the schematic design has been allocated to the school.

The school has been listed by the education department as a high priority for an upgrade since 2010. The school community has campaigned enthusiastically and worked hard to demonstrate the genuine need for the redevelopment of the school. The minister has visited the school and acknowledged that the need is real. In response to a question on notice, he restated the high-priority listing given to the school by the department. The minister has seen and knows that the asbestos must be removed and that the rotten timber, the peeling paintwork, the leaky roof and the poor ventilation all need to be replaced, not just patched up. In fact yesterday staff spent the day fixing leaks rather than teaching children.

Despite this, the school has recently been audited again. The children of Portarlington and the surrounding area deserve facilities that match the high standard of education that they are receiving. The staff deserve working conditions that enable them to develop and expand on their teaching. Portarlington Primary School has waited long enough. The current government has given no assurances to the school or the community that it will provide anything other than maintenance and patch-up repair work. This redevelopment is urgent, and the minister must provide an assurance to the community that it is a priority and that the school will get this urgent upgrade.

Bayswater electorate: volunteer awards

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — It was wonderful to celebrate the many long-serving volunteers in the Bayswater electorate with a volunteer appreciation awards morning tea and certificate presentation. I held this presentation to thank my local volunteers who had provided 10 or more years of consecutive volunteering service to the community. Congratulations to those who received certificates for more than 10 years of service and those top five volunteers who also received trophies for being the longest serving, namely: Margaret Draeger, 38 years; Beryl Sperling, 40 years; Alan Hodgkin, 43 years; Clive Manly, 52 years; and the tireless Tom Bedohazy, 54 years. These people are truly amazing and an inspiration to all who meet them.

Yawarra Primary School: Garden Gurus project

Mrs VICTORIA — I was delighted to attend Yawarra Primary School to help the Garden Gurus plant shrubs around their school. It was wonderful to spend time with this group of children who dedicated their time and effort to planting the shrubs. I would like to give a special thanks to Fotina, the teacher who coordinated the students for the morning. I would also like to thank Sami, Nathan, Meaghan, Brendan, Shae, Isabelle and Harrison for being members of the Garden Gurus and for working so well together.

Fairhills High School: presentation ball

Mrs VICTORIA — I had the honour of attending the Fairhills High School presentation ball. The young ladies looked beautiful and the young men looked very handsome. Congratulations to all the students who participated.

Orchestra Victoria: events

Mrs VICTORIA — It was great to attend two magnificent Orchestra Victoria events, being collaborations with Burt Bacharach and Michael Bolton. Once again, Orchestra Victoria excelled itself, with both artists heaping praise on our players. Congratulations to Franca Smarrelli, Guy Noble and all those involved in Orchestra Victoria on showing what a truly world-class orchestra it is.

Croatian and Jewish communities: dinner

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — Last Sunday night, 29 April, together with the member for Caulfield, I had the honour and pleasure of attending a dinner that was jointly organised by the Croatian and Jewish

communities of Victoria to build and strengthen ties between the two communities. It was held at the Croatian Club on Matthews Road, Corio. The dinner was hosted by Croatian Consul-General Mr Antun Babic. I take this opportunity to commend Mr Babic on the work he does as Consul-General.

The event commenced with a number of speakers, all of whom emphasised the importance of a truly multicultural community and of acceptance and understanding between the groups. I take this opportunity to commend each speaker for their contribution to the night — Nina Bassat, president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Danny Lamm of the Zionist Federation of Australia, Graham Leonard of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Mr Antun Babic and last, but definitely not least, Mr Sergio Marusic, secretary of the Australian Croatian Congress.

Attendees at the dinner were then treated to some traditional Croatian dance and music courtesy of the first-class Lado dance group. Dinner was courtesy of the Croatian Club, and it was enjoyed by all.

I commend both communities for their leadership and for having not only the initiative but also the courage to organise the dinner and in doing so promote friendship and acceptance between the communities. To all I say a job well done.

Vietnam veterans: Tour of Duty charity ride

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I extend my congratulations to Boronia RSL member Ted Stapleton and fellow Vietnam veterans who took part in the Tour of Duty charity event ride held in March. The 400-kilometre ride over four days raised \$50 000 for the National Vietnam Veterans Museum in Phillip Island.

Oxfam: Trailwalker fundraiser

Mr WAKELING — Thank you to my fellow team members, the member for Gembrook, the member for Caulfield and parliamentary staff member David Robertson, for their support and encouragement whilst our team, Pollie Trailwalkers, completed the 100-kilometre Oxfam Trailwalker in 27 hours and 27 minutes and raised over \$4200 for the great work that Oxfam does to fight poverty both here in Australia and overseas.

Anzac Day: Ferntree Gully electorate

Mr WAKELING — It was an honour to be a part of Anzac Day ceremonies at Heany Park Primary

School, Wattleview Primary School and the Boronia RSL.

It was also an honour to assist residents at Waterford Valley retirement village with their Anzac Day ceremony and to see their new flagpole, which I donated to the village.

Jim Dunn

Mr WAKELING — It was a pleasure to recently present two medals to Jim Dunn. Jim was the recipient of a National Service Medal and a Defence Service Medal. This medal was presented to Jim to recognise his service in the defence of Australia.

H. V. Jones Reserve, Ferntree Gully: facilities

Mr WAKELING — I welcome the recent announcement for H. V. Jones Reserve to receive \$30 000 funding for the construction of a much-needed veranda. H. V. Jones Reserve is home to the Mountain Gate Cricket Club, Boronia Soccer Club, Boronia Junior Soccer Club and Knox United Soccer Club. I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation for his efforts.

Knox Park: BMX track

Mr WAKELING — The member for Scoresby and state Treasurer and I welcome the recent announcement of \$44 000 funding for the Knox Park BMX track. The funding to Knox City Council will be used to upgrade floodlighting at the track.

Karoo Primary School: student leaders

Mr WAKELING — Congratulations to all the 2012 elected captains who were presented with their badges and certificates at a recent school assembly.

Budget: Northcote electorate

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — Projects right across the north and west of Melbourne have again been overlooked by the Liberal government. In my electorate important school upgrades like that at Thornbury Primary School have been scrapped by the new Liberal government, no doubt — like the last time the Liberal Party was in power — because it falls on the wrong side of the Yarra River.

Cuts to programs designed to improve access to public transport for those living with a disability has hit tram route 86, cuts to cycling upgrades have hit hard the building of the link between the Darebin and the main Yarra trail, and cuts to TAFE funding, the School Start

bonus and the education maintenance allowance will further hurt families already struggling in our community.

Another project studiously overlooked by the Liberal government is the upgrade of the Chandler Highway bridge. I share the bridge crossing with the member for Kew, but he has expressed little if any concern about the fact that since the coalition came to office all works initiated by Labor to unclog this bottleneck have ground to a halt. This is consistently identified as one of the worst congestion points in Melbourne's roads network. The government's failure to deal with traffic heading north and south has an impact not only on the eastern and northern suburbs but also on traffic on the Eastern Freeway every morning. As the exit from the freeway to the Chandler Highway bridge and Kew fills with traffic, cars begin to clog the two adjacent lanes, and I have regularly seen buses bogged down trying to get through the traffic to the Hoddle Street exit.

Instead of continuing Labor's endeavours to address this significant pinch point, the Liberals have instead decided to spend \$15 million on another study for a link from the Eastern Freeway to the Tullamarine Freeway. Even if this project ever sees the light of day, it will be poorly served by the Chandler Highway bridge bottleneck. The time to address this problem is now.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Rodney electorate: volunteers

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — Volunteers are the heart and soul of communities across the Rodney electorate. There are many groups, organisations and services that would simply not exist if not for the hard work of volunteers. On sporting fields, in our schools, at our festivals and events, at our hospitals and importantly during emergencies and natural disasters, people give their precious time to benefit not only individuals and groups but also the wider community.

It is estimated that 6 million Australians volunteer every year. The majority of those who volunteer their time would be united in saying that they do it not for themselves but for the benefit of others. Many volunteers give not to receive thanks or accolades but for the satisfaction and personal achievement of helping people across their community.

In the Rodney electorate, where I live, the community thrives on the goodness of volunteers — at the football and netball club, on local committees, in schools and community halls and in other areas such as service

clubs, the State Emergency Service, the Country Fire Authority and hospital auxiliaries. Volunteering brings a sense of community pride and empowers people to stand together in good times and bad. The act of volunteering also acknowledges that there is a bigger, more important reason to take on a volunteer role. It is about doing something, large or small, not just for your own benefit but also for that of the wider community.

I encourage all Victorians to take the time to volunteer in some way, shape or form, see the benefits that will flow and begin to understand why so many people have volunteered in the past and will continue to do so into the future.

Schools: city of Wyndham

Mr PALLAS (Tarneit) — I rise to speak about the level of investment in education infrastructure in my community of Wyndham in the 2012–13 Victorian state budget. I acknowledge that the storm-damaged Galvin Park Secondary College has been allocated \$14 million for its rebuild but note that only \$832 000 of this amount is allocated to be spent this year, which looks like another bandaid and another delay for the permanent fix. The community at Galvin Park needs to be provided with a time line for the expenditure of the remainder of the money so they can have certainty about when classes can be held in permanent and modern classrooms rather than making do with temporary demountables, as they are currently doing and will possibly have to do for years to come. I also note that the government has still failed, after almost 18 months in office, to honour its pre-election promise to immediately fund the third and final stage of the Labor-commenced and \$13 million-allocated rebuild of Werribee Secondary College.

Finally, I note that stage 1 of the construction of Tarneit Secondary College is to be completed this budget year and emphasise that this does not mean that the work is done on the construction of this school. The school community needs clarity about the future construction schedule.

The little this budget has delivered for education in the community is nowhere near adequate. Wyndham's high growth rate — it increases by the population of Benalla every year — means it needs 26 more schools by 2015. That means a clear and consistent investment strategy is necessary to avoid creating a corridor of educational disadvantage.

Eating Disorders Victoria: Feed the Soul campaign

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Yesterday I was delighted to co-host with Jenny Mikakos, a member for Northern Metropolitan Region in the other place, the Eating Disorders Victoria (EDV) Feed the Soul fundraising campaign. Launched by the Minister for Mental Health, the campaign is timed to coincide with International No Diet Day on Sunday, 6 May. EDV's messages are: to embrace a healthier relationship with food, that food feeds our mind just as much as our body and that healthy bodies come in all sizes. Eating Disorders Victoria supports and informs people who suffer from eating disorders, as well as their families and carers. I encourage everyone to support its campaign.

Eating disorders are increasing in prevalence in our community. They are illnesses, not choices. Treatment, once the illness is diagnosed, is not easy. It can take a long time for the sufferer to resume any semblance of a normal existence, robbing many of what should be the most exciting, fun-filled years of their life. Reasons for the onset of an eating disorder are many and complex, and it frequently occurs alongside mental illness. The media practice of presenting unrealistic images encourages our vulnerable young to strive for what is not natural.

Israel has recently introduced legislation requiring that any digitally altered image of the human body produced in Israel that is published in print or electronically will now have to carry a statement that the image has been altered. Australia must follow Israel's lead. As deputy chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians association, I moved a motion that the federal government be urged to introduce similar legislation, and this motion was endorsed by every member of the committee. Body image is just that — an image, not reality.

Budget: Kororoit electorate

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — I rise today to grieve for the people of Kororoit, who yet again have been completely shafted by the Baillieu government come budget time. On Saturday, 28 April, I gathered with the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Minister for Public Transport, the member for Keilor, the member for Melton and over 100 residents in Caroline Springs for a community rally to discuss funding for the long-overdue Caroline Springs station. The Minister for Public Transport was invited to attend to explain to residents why this government has refused to complete this vital piece of infrastructure, defined as the 'famous road to nowhere'. Not surprisingly, he did not show up.

I was then not surprised that come budget afternoon, Caroline Springs station had not been allocated 1 cent in the 2012–13 state budget, despite this being a key promise of Ted Baillieu in the lead-up to the 2008 Kororoit by-election. By now residents should not be surprised at this sort of showing from the Liberals, but it begs the question: what are the Liberals doing for residents in Melbourne's growth areas?

Similarly, the campaign for the upgrade of the dangerous Main Road level crossing in St Albans was greeted with the news that there is no new money for the grade separation promised so emphatically by both the now Premier and the now Minister for Public Transport during the 2008 by-election and the 2010 state election campaign. Despite being ranked no. 3 on the department's priority list, it seems that commuters in Melbourne's west will continue to be subjected to the dangers of this crossing.

When the only major announcement for residents in Kororoit is the news that the government is building a new prison around the corner from their homes, you know it has been a bad budget.

Mount Waverley electorate: senior citizens associations

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — Over the last fortnight I have had the pleasure of attending meetings of the Armenian senior citizens association and the Macedonian senior citizens association in Waverley. Both meetings provided the opportunity to meet with senior citizens and listen to their interests and needs whilst discussing my role in serving their constituency. I thank both organisations for the opportunity to meet with them and look forward to assisting their ongoing activities wherever possible.

Anzac Day: Mount Waverley electorate

Mr GIDLEY — On Sunday, 22 April, I attended the Waverley RSL's annual Anzac march and commemoration at the Glen Waverley cenotaph. Anzac Day provides an important opportunity to acknowledge the sacrifice of the men and women who fought to defend the values and heritage of our country and those of the commonwealth. A smaller dawn service was also held at the cenotaph on 25 April, which I had the pleasure of attending.

Anzac Day: city of Monash schools

Mr GIDLEY — Schools in the city of Monash conducted a number of Anzac ceremonies, including the combined Rotary Anzac schools service and those

held at individual schools. These occasions not only commemorated the sacrifice of servicemen and servicewomen but also reminded current generations of our history and the horrors of war. Lest we forget.

Mount Waverley electorate: sporting clubs

Mr GIDLEY — In addition to providing an opportunity for residents to engage in competitive sporting activity, local sport brings people from different backgrounds together and is a great leveller. I have been pleased to join the Waverley Blues Football Club and clubs competing at Central Reserve, Glen Waverley, and Mayfield Park Reserve, Mount Waverley, in their winter sporting season over the last few weeks. I look forward to continuing to support these clubs wherever possible.

Berwick Artfest

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — The Berwick Artists Society, supported by the Rotary Club of Berwick, recently held its inaugural Berwick Artfest, an exhibition showcasing original artwork from both emerging and professional artists. I was invited to open the exhibition, which took the incredibly hardworking and dedicated Berwick Artists Society over six months to organise. A big crowd attended.

The Berwick Artists Society subcommittee responsible for organising the event included Linda Oeser, Susan March, Mary Murphy, Rosalind Meadmore, Amanda Gray, Bronwyn Hopkins, Sheila Daniels and Wendy Brock. They were ably assisted by the many wonderful members of the artists society who dedicated their time and energy to ensuring that the exhibition was such a success.

Herman Pekel, one of Australia's leading impressionist painters, was the special guest judge. With over 250 entries spread across a diverse range of categories, this was no easy task; however, Herman awarded the Best in Show award to Gary Miles for his work entitled *Orange Dune*. It was one of my favourites too. The winners in the various categories included Eric Sheperd, Cherry Beresford, Sylvia Fielding, the super-talented Ern Trembath, Rob Pritchard, Rosemary Todman Parrant, Gary Miles, Ruth Chamberlain — I loved her camellias — and Chantelle Key. The People's Choice award was shared between Michelin Jones for *Budding Masterchef* and Jan Long for her piece *Together*.

The major sponsors of this event included the Rotary Club of Berwick, Minuteman Press, O'Brien Real Estate, Jenny's Original Boards and Ern Trembath, who

donated his painting *Farm at Alexandra*, valued at more than \$2000, for a raffle. I was thankful for the flower arrangements provided by Berwick Flowers, which were simply stunning. Thank you. The works on display showcased a wealth of talent from the local area.

Grand Strzelecki Track: opening

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — This weekend will see the official opening of the Grand Strzelecki Track and provide an opportunity for local residents to walk and view approximately 100 kilometres of trails and walking tracks. There has been considerable work undertaken in recent months to establish and re-establish tracks from Morwell National Park all the way through to Tarra-Bulga National Park and Balook. Some of these tracks were impacted upon by the 2009 bushfires, and credit must go to all those who have assisted in the rehabilitation and extensive works undertaken so far.

It is fair to say that the Grand Strzelecki Track is not well recognised outside the Gippsland region; however, the official opening, to be undertaken by the Deputy Premier this Sunday, will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase a pristine part of the world that is right on our doorstep. Having walked part of the track just last week with Alan Lewis, project manager, Kevin Heggen, contractor, and Darryl Whitaker, cameraman, I can attest to the fabulous and tranquil setting we are blessed to have in our midst.

Credit must be given to Wellington Shire Council, Latrobe City Council, Hancock Victorian Plantations and Bendigo Bank. All ought to be commended for their support of and commitment to this project. I am also mindful of the enormous contribution made by other volunteer groups that promote and maintain our wonderful park precincts. In recent times we have seen groups such as Friends of Tyers Park, Friends of Morwell National Park, St Gwinear Ski Patrol and Friends of Tarra Bulga National Park receive funding from the coalition government through the Communities for Nature grants program and the Healthy Parks Healthy People community grants program, indicating our government's commitment to accessible, quality parks in Victoria.

Essendon electorate: sporting clubs

Mr MADDEN (Essendon) — I want to pay tribute to two key sporting clubs in the Essendon electorate that do an outstanding job for not only local sports participants but also the broader community.

The first one is the Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club. I would like to congratulate its members on another successful season in which they won several premierships. I also congratulate their key coach, Mel Jones, who has been a test player for Australia and also does great work mentoring and coaching the young ladies of the cricket club. The club has travelled overseas to India in recent years, which has expanded the horizons of many players. That was an initiative of Mel Jones to improve not only the game of the players but also their experience and to contribute back to the community.

I also congratulate the Essendon Football Club on the launch of its reconciliation action plan for 2011–12. It will do work not only in the local community here in Victoria and in the Essendon electorate but more broadly in the Tiwi Island and Darwin communities. At the recent launch the club announced that Michael Long will be the ambassador for the reconciliation action plan. I would like to congratulate Ian Robson, the CEO of the Essendon Football Club, on his outstanding work. I also express my disappointment that the \$15 million that was sought by Essendon Football Club to assist in its relocation, which would have opened up the opportunity for community groups to use Windy Hill, has not been delivered in the recent state budget.

Budget: Mordialloc electorate

Ms WREFORD (Mordialloc) — On behalf of the Mordialloc electorate I say, 'What a magnificent budget!'. Over \$158 million worth of important projects that the community was waiting for have been funded — and funded in the context of tough times that require a tough but balanced budget. The allocations include \$2.5 million for new administration and learning spaces at Dingley Primary School, \$55 000 for a new high fence at Kingswood Primary School and \$156.7 million for the Kingston leg of the Dingley bypass. If we look back to 1999, we see that Labor promised to build the bypass by 2009, and through the good times, before Gillard and Rudd, state Labor failed to deliver a cent. In our first budget we planned it, and in our second budget we have funded it. I congratulate the Treasurer on a beautifully balanced budget.

Anzac Day: Mordialloc electorate

Ms WREFORD — On Anzac Day I had the privilege of attending services at Cheltenham and Mentone. I congratulate the students and local bands that participated in those moving services. I would also like to commend the Cheltenham and Mentone RSL

clubs for the services they put on and for all the work they do throughout the year.

Parkdale Bowling Club: presentation day

Ms WREFORD — I recently had the pleasure of attending the Parkdale Bowling Club annual presentation day afternoon tea. It is a wonderful social club, keeping so many members active and involved. Well done.

Anzac Day: Oakleigh electorate

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — I was very pleased to participate in a day of activities at the Oakleigh-Carnegie RSL on Sunday, 22 April, to commemorate Anzac Day. We started in the morning with a short march — led by the Oakleigh City Band, the Catafalque party from the 22 Construction Regiment of the Royal Australian Engineers, Oakleigh Barracks, along with our returned servicemen, friends and many scouts, guides and cubs — to the Oakleigh cenotaph for the formal service of commemoration.

A very good initiative this year was to have Scott Murray, the year 11 college vice-captain at South Oakleigh Secondary College, and Michaela Anderson, a year 12 student at Sacred Heart Girls College, share the reading of the *Anzac Requiem*. Both Scott and Michaela read this very special piece with dignity and presence, and it was a great pleasure and honour to have two of our young community leaders from two of our great local secondary colleges contributing to the commemoration service.

A lunch was held to commemorate the dedication of the Oakleigh RSL building 90 years ago. It is interesting to note that the dedication was conducted by Senator Brigadier General H. E. Elliott, known as Pompey Elliott, who was involved in the Gallipoli landing in 1915. The guest speaker for the lunch was retired Brigadier Keith Rossi, who spoke about the ties between football and both World Wars.

Following the lunch another service was held at the football ground next door prior to the start of the premier B division game between Oakleigh Amateur Football Club and Melbourne University Blacks Football Club. This was the first time a local Anzac football match had been held. The RSL provided the Oakleigh-Carnegie RSL Anzac Memorial Cup, which was won by the Uni Blacks, and a best-on-ground medal judged by the umpires, which was awarded to no. 23 for the Uni Blacks, Dan Costello. We hope this can be an annual event.

Budget: Wodonga Senior Secondary College

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — I was delighted with the 2012–13 budget announcement of \$10 million in funding for Wodonga Senior Secondary College. The regeneration program for the construction of new administration and learning areas will end years of staff and students having to work in substandard conditions due to years of maintenance neglect and funding black holes under the former government. Water leaks, termites and mould have caused not only unpleasant but also unsafe conditions, with health issues caused by mould and mildew spores, and treacherous conditions with floorboards being eaten away, which has forced closures of classrooms and other rooms.

Let me remind members that under the Labor government the Wodonga secondary schools were the first in the state of Victoria to undergo amalgamation, and assurances were given of capital investment improvements for Wodonga Senior Secondary College. However, Labor simply abrogated its responsibilities to ensure that the staff and students of that facility would be the first in the state to receive that investment as agreed to. It has taken the coalition government in these tough economic times to recognise that this was one job that had to be done. We have taken on that responsibility in these hard times, and we assure the students in that school community that their future is in good hands.

Schools: education maintenance allowance

Ms KNIGHT (Ballarat West) — The elimination of the School Start bonus and the slashing of the education maintenance allowance are cruel blows that will affect the most vulnerable families in our community. I worry about schools in my electorate that will be most affected, such as Delacombe Primary School at which I spoke yesterday. Delacombe is a fantastic school that has amazingly dedicated teaching and support staff who go out of their way to give all students an innovative, accessible, fair and just educational and developmental experience.

At Delacombe Primary School, 80 per cent of the students are budgeted as being eligible for the education maintenance allowance, which goes towards materials and supplies, swimming lessons and a food program. The school has made a considered decision to ensure that all children have access to the same experiences regardless of their challenges, circumstances or experiences.

This cruel cut has the capacity to divide a school into two distinct camps of the haves and have-nots. Imagine

what this would do to a child's capacity to learn and develop. Imagine how a child would feel walking into school knowing that due to circumstances beyond their control they were not entitled to engage in the same opportunities as everyone else. Of course schools will do everything they can to prevent this from happening. I know the dedicated and committed staff at Delacombe Primary School and the staff at every other school in my electorate will now have to work even harder to continue to provide a curriculum based on justice and fairness, and they will do that because they care about all kids, not just some.

Budget: responsible management

Mr McCURDY (Murray Valley) — The Baillieu government should be congratulated on the responsible budget it has delivered for all Victorians. This has been an investment in our fiscal and future viability. The Premier has shown excellent leadership in difficult times.

Anzac Day: Murray Valley electorate

Mr McCURDY — Anzac Day in the Murray Valley continues to grow into a community event that respectfully marks the sacrifices of our soldiers. I attended the Cobram-Barooga RSL sub-branch dawn service, and the support shown by young and old continues to amaze me. The Rutherglen service was officiated by David Martin, OAM, and the president, Brian Murtagh, in front of a crowd that simply made me proud to be Australian. At Wangaratta we were treated to a proud and passionate speech by Amanda Roberts, a year 12 Wangaratta High School student.

Cobram Primary School: Parliament House visit

Mr McCURDY — Many thanks to Cobram Primary School and its teacher, Ms Julie Walsh. Ms Walsh gave the year 5 and 6 students the background for their visit to the Parliament next month. At a recent visit I was very impressed with the students' desire to learn about the Parliament and how laws are made.

Eldorado Museum

Mr McCURDY — I was very pleased to attend the Eldorado Museum open day last weekend, which showcased the wonderful features of yesteryear. The hardworking committee provided live displays, while the barbecue attracted a huge crowd. Well done to this proactive community, which never misses an

opportunity to welcome one and all to learn about its proud history.

Cobram: Little Athletics fun run

Mr McCURDY — The recent Little Athletics Recopak fun run held in Cobram was well attended. Nearly 100 entrants braved a cool Sunday morning to support our children and Little Athletics. The 5 or 10 kilometre run or walk along the picturesque banks of the mighty Murray River will grow into a bigger attraction as years go on.

Employment: government performance

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — Jobs matter, employment matters and work matters, but this is something the government fails to recognise. This week's failure by the Baillieu government's most senior ministers to realise that they have abrogated their duty in relation to employment growth in Victoria was apparent when the budget papers listed employment as zero. Yesterday when the shadow Treasurer asked the Treasurer to outline facts in relation to employment growth in the past financial year, the current financial year and future years, the Treasurer was unable to provide this Parliament with answers.

The Premier, Treasurer and senior ministers in the government must understand that the government's first responsibility is to its people. Making people the priority in decision making ensures that the community works in partnership and that employment grows. To not recognise this fails to understand that every family, every person, needs to be able to work. We need to be able to work to support our families and for self-esteem, and human dignity depends upon the government of a state making an absolute commitment to working to ensure that there is jobs growth. Zero growth in employment was an utter embarrassment in this budget.

Oxfam: Trailwalker fundraiser

Mr NEWTON-BROWN (Pahran) — Hats off to my parliamentary colleagues the members for Gembrook, Caulfield and Ferntree Gully, along with parliamentary attendant David Robertson, for completing the Oxfam walk last week. They walked 100 kilometres in just over 27 hours and raised over \$4000 for this important charity.

Rainbow Families Council: delegation

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — It was a pleasure to host a delegation of members of the Rainbow Families Council in my office last week to hear about the practical issues they have in gaining recognition for

various aspects of their families which do not fall into the traditional norms of family life in Victoria. I look forward to working with this group to achieve fairer, compassionate and practical outcomes to provide their families with greater security.

Russian community: Prahran seniors club

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — I was pleased to attend the recent meeting of the Russian seniors club at the Horace Petty estate in Prahran. I heard all about the fantastic activities of the club and all the excursions it had organised recently. I was pleased to announce further funding to assist with the running of this club.

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria: report

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — I was pleased to attend the launch of the *Private Lives 2* report into GLBTI (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex) health and wellbeing with the Minister for Mental Health and former Premier Jeff Kennett. This is a significant report which provides some valuable feedback and advice as to what we as a community should be doing about the appalling inequity in terms of health and wellbeing amongst our GLBTI community.

Greek community: Prahran seniors club

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — I spent yet another great day with the Greek seniors last week. The Greek community is one of the most significant original communities in Prahran, and it is always a pleasure to visit the seniors group. I was pleased to be able to announce a further grant to assist with the running of the group.

Anzac Day: Prahran electorate

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — The Prahran RSL was honoured to have Alison Jones, the mother of Sergeant Brett Wood, attend its Anzac Day service this year. Sergeant Wood was renowned as a fearless soldier in Afghanistan who was awarded the Medal for Gallantry last year.

Schools: education maintenance allowance

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — The Baillieu government deserves to be condemned for slashing the education maintenance allowance to the most vulnerable students in the state. This cut will have the biggest impact on the most disadvantaged schools right across the state, including in the electorates of members of the government. This government should be condemned for cutting Victorian certificate of applied learning coordination funding, which will again impact

very heavily on those kids who want to get a good qualification who do not go through the Victorian certificate of education stream.

The government also should be condemned for failing to fund all of the school upgrades that the government promised at the last election in its election commitments. There are also no capital upgrades for early childhood centres —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

APPROPRIATION (2012/2013) BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 1 May; motion of Mr WELLS (Treasurer).

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask all members of the house to extend to the member for Lyndhurst the same courtesy that was given to the Treasurer.

Mr HOLDING (Lyndhurst) — I never thought that I would accuse the Treasurer of being a student of Marx, and while I would never suggest that there are many followers of Karl Marx opposite, there are more than a few who do a pretty good impression of Groucho Marx, who said, 'Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies'. This budget would make Groucho proud, and that is on top of the uncanny resemblance to the ever-silent Harpo that has become the Treasurer's stock-in-trade in the lead-up to budgets.

Certainly the Treasurer is pretty good at looking for trouble. He has now spent 17 months blaming everyone and everything for Victoria's economic woes. If it is not the former government, the federal government, the carbon tax, the global financial crisis, the euro debt crisis, Japan's earthquake or the high Australian dollar, it is the Reserve Bank of Australia that is playing the role of villain in the pantomime that has become Victoria's fiscal strategy.

If imitation is flattery, Groucho would be touched to see how the Treasurer has gone about incorrectly diagnosing the state's problems. Victorians are supposed to believe that the Treasurer was right last year when his budget denied that there was a jobs crisis and contained no measures to stimulate economic growth and generate jobs. Victorians remember his entire budget speech; the word 'jobs' was not uttered once. Victorians are now paying the price for that arrogant miscalculation.

As for applying the wrong remedies, Victorians might have been better off with Harpo's whistling and horn-blowing than the directionless drivel offered up to them in Tuesday's budget. The sad truth is that this government was told last year that for our state to thrive we needed a plan to create jobs, but the Baillieu government thought it knew better and instead invested its energy in trying to trash the economic legacy of the former government. Victorian families are now bearing the cost of that choice.

We have all heard the now notorious story of the Premier being asked at a boardroom lunch about his vision. He is said to have got out of his chair, walked to the window, looked into the distance and declared, 'I can see my house from here'. The Premier may hate being asked the question, but Victorians do not need stand-up; they need a statesman. Our state needs a vision that is comparable with the journey we have been on and commensurate with the challenges we now face.

Victoria has led the nation for decades. We have come up with the big ideas for reform of our federation. We have driven the national reform agenda. We have run Australia's best health system. We led the nation in jobs creation. We were pioneers in creating the world's safest roads. We have staged the best sporting events. We have led culturally and creatively. Our regions have thrived even in the face of drought, floods and fire, and Melbourne became the world's most livable city. We have created a thriving and diverse community — the most multicultural in the world. This legacy was not the creation of one government or even one political party. We have had continuity, with successive governments building on the strengths of those that came before. Victoria has set the benchmark for the rest of Australia, but setting the benchmark demands an ambitious government — a government that looks forward to make things better rather than one that looks back to find something to blame.

Victorians have always had to pedal faster. Not blessed with abundant natural resources, Victorians can never afford to be complacent. But now our vital signs are showing the strain. The government's budget reveals that economic growth has fallen from a healthy 3 per cent to 1.5 per cent this year. In 2009, in the middle of the global financial crisis, 92 per cent of the full-time jobs created in Australia were generated right here in Victoria. Last year the Treasurer promised us 55 000 jobs a year. Instead we are losing 900 every week, and the government's own budget reveals that employment growth is now forecast at 0.00 per cent. Yesterday, with only two months to go, the Treasurer would not even guarantee that we would reach that.

Unemployment is now at 5.8 per cent, higher than any other state in mainland Australia. While the government tells Victorians that it has got their backs on jobs, if you look at the budget, you see the government actually expects to fail. Its 'investments facilitated' performance measure reveals its target — to facilitate only half the investment achieved during Labor's last year in office. That is right, Speaker. It is not just that those opposite are expecting to fail; they have actually stopped trying.

The outlook for Victoria's regions is, sadly, even worse. For all the Deputy Premier's bleatings, the government aims — that is right; it actually aspires — to facilitate fewer jobs in regional Victoria than in each of the last two years. As the Deputy Premier loves to boast, Victorians have never seen anything like it! At the time of our last budget Victoria's population was growing at 2.2 per cent, the highest rate since at least 1971. Now our population growth is slowing. In the 11 years Labor was in office an average of \$581 million each year was invested in health-related building projects. This government's budget reveals it will spend \$100 million less over four years than we spent on average each and every year.

While the Treasurer spruiks training as the key to productivity, this budget boasts the single largest cut to the TAFE sector in this state's history. The Victorian TAFE Association estimates that \$100 million will be lost to the system every year because of the choice this government has made. And today Victorians are confronted with the astonishing revelation that the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Honourable Peter Hall, appears to have contemplated resignation as a consequence of these changes. Now he expects us to believe he thinks these changes will make Victoria's TAFE sector 'the strongest in the country'. That is right: he expects us to believe he contemplated giving it away — because he was making the system the strongest in the country. Government members must take Victorians for fools. Peter Hall is actually the canary in the mine. His first letter speaks for itself. He had the courage to call it, but not the courage to stand his ground.

Instead of telling Victorians that our state can be even better and delivering a budget that is a pathway to take us there, this government has driven expectations through the floor. It has cut and run; it has smashed our state's confidence. This budget is not an answer; it is an alibi. As Tim Colebatch observed yesterday in the *Age*, there was not:

... anything resembling a jobs plan, or anything aiming to get the economy to fire on all cylinders again.

And there was nothing to answer the question Victorians are asking: why does Ted Baillieu want to be Premier? Where does he want to take us?

At some point, his government is going to have to tell us what it stands for. The budget was a missed chance to do that.

Many Victorians are asking the same questions.

This budget contains no vision for our state. It is just a litany of excuses about why things cannot be done. There are no plans for transport, infrastructure, health, education, or jobs; it is just a narrative about tough times.

Well, Labor faced tough times too: our worst drought, our most tragic natural disaster on Black Saturday, and the global financial crisis — the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. These budget papers acknowledge that our GST write-downs during those times were as significant as the ones this government now claims prevent it from taking action to tackle some of our state's biggest challenges.

No state government can control the economic cycle or fix the dollar, but a strong state government can invest in infrastructure to improve productivity and generate jobs. A strong state government can use its significant spending power to source locally rather than offshore. A strong state government can prioritise its spending to boost the construction industry. A strong state government can invest in skills and training, and a strong state government can support Victorian companies seeking to become more innovative and globally competitive. This state government refuses to accept that it has a responsibility to do any of these things. The government's entire strategy is built on the premise that it is hostage to events, rather than shaping them. Victorians are entitled to ask, 'What did Ted Baillieu think he was running for when he offered himself to lead our state in November 2010?'

It is bad when politicians promise to fix problems that they know they cannot fix, but it is even worse when politicians fail to fix the problems they can fix. When Labor faced the global financial crisis, it recast the first home bonus to support the building industry by targeting its assistance to new housing construction starts, particularly in regional Victoria. That and other actions that we took proved a great success. Victoria's property market defied expectations and stayed stronger than forecasters anticipated. This government has scrapped that bonus. This decision makes new houses less attractive than existing housing stock. Members should make no mistake about it: this decision will cost Victorian jobs.

When Labor came to office it established the Victorian industry participation policy to ensure that where possible government spending supported local jobs. That policy was a direct result of the rolling stock replacement program undertaken by the former Kennett government in its last days in office, which saw hundreds of millions of dollars in new rolling stock destined to be sourced from overseas. Our policy gave Victorian companies seeking to supply goods and services to the Victorian government a fighting chance.

From emergency service uniforms to new trains for our transport system, sending this work offshore is a sure-fire way to kill local jobs. But this government just does not seem to get it. In review after review commissioned by the government, the government's hand-picked experts recommend applying the blowtorch to Labor's Victorian industry participation policy.

Even in tough times our government kept striving to maintain our state's leadership. Instead of raiding WorkCover's strong balance sheet to prop up the budget as this government has done, our government used WorkSafe's strong capital position to establish WorkHealth, a world-first workplace preventive health check to identify the risk factors for chronic health conditions amongst Victorian workers, and we established the Victorian cancer action plan — two strategies to deal with the biggest health challenges facing Victorian people. This budget closes the door on Victoria's cancer action plan.

The Treasurer continues to peddle two myths about Labor's economic record to justify the harsh measures that this government has taken. The first is the furphy that our state expenditures were on an unsustainable growth path. The Treasurer knows that this is not true. Once the federal stimulus funding was netted out Victoria's revenue and expenditure growth pretty much paralleled each other over Labor's period in office. This can hardly be a revelation to the Treasurer; after all, it is the very reason every one of Labor's budgets over 11 years received an emphatic AAA credit rating from Moody's and Standard and Poor's. In the same breath the Treasurer advanced the spurious claim that Labor's budget was in structural deficit. If the Treasurer's logic, oxymoronic though that phrase may be, is accepted, then his own budget — his own surplus — dependent on unsustainable cash grabs from public entities, can be critiqued in precisely the same way. So every Victorian should know that the very foundations of the Treasurer's budget are based on spurious claims justifying cruel cuts that will hurt Victorian families.

This budget's cruellest claim surely must be the Treasurer's boast in his budget speech that 'the government's spending priorities are focused on ... protecting the state's most vulnerable citizens'. Who are Victoria's most vulnerable citizens that the Treasurer has pledged to protect? Are they not the thousands of Victorians whose concessions, by the government's own admission, are set to fall in real terms? Think about it: CPI is forecast at 2.75 per cent, government wages policy is 2.5 per cent, but our state government will only give the poorest Victorians 2 per cent. If 2.5 per cent is right for nurses, teachers, police, public servants and politicians, surely it is not right that the poorest Victorians are funded for only 2 per cent.

Who are Victoria's most vulnerable citizens that the Treasurer has pledged to protect?

Mr O'Brien interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Energy and Resources!

Mr HOLDING — Are they not the 40 000 Victorian families that in 2013 would have been eligible for the government's means-tested School Start bonus that has now been abolished because according to the Premier his family did not need it? Last time I checked, his family was not even eligible for it. Who are Victoria's most vulnerable citizens that the Treasurer has pledged to protect? Are they not the thousands of Victorian families who receive the education maintenance allowance (EMA)? The government's own department of education describes the EMA as 'assistance to low-income families by helping with the costs associated with the education of their children'. It would be difficult to have designed a more targeted attack on vulnerable Victorians than this government's decision to discontinue the schools component of the EMA.

Those of us on this side of the chamber know better than anybody that education is the great driver of opportunity. When I look into the eyes of the parents of young people who have come from so many different backgrounds and settled in my electorate I see people who trust that education will be the thing that gives their kids a chance for a better life than they had hoped for for themselves. What were the members of the government's budget and expenditure committee thinking when they decided to cut this funding? These Tories, with their mantra of rugged individualism and of people dragging themselves up by their bootstraps, are taking money away from the poorest Victorians trying to get the very education that would give them a

fighting chance to achieve their dreams. How dare they?

Who are Victoria's most vulnerable citizens that the Treasurer has pledged to protect? The TAFE sector has always had a responsibility to provide access for disadvantaged people. But now we learn that TAFE leaders have been told that community service obligations can be discarded as part of the cuts contained in this budget. Holmesglen Institute of TAFE chief Bruce Mackenzie said in today's *Age*, 'This is an attack on the most vulnerable people'.

When it comes to protecting Victoria's most vulnerable citizens I will give the Treasurer credit for choosing his words carefully, because when the government decided to slash funding for refugee support he said that while they may be vulnerable, they are not yet citizens. Victoria is not like other states where rednecks question immigration every day. Immigration has been unambiguously good for Victoria. Celebrating our diversity and our multiculturalism crosses the political divide. Surely our most vulnerable migrants are our most recently arrived refugees. This government should be ashamed that it has so significantly reduced support for their health, education and justice needs.

One group of vulnerable Victorians who found a voice in the government's budget priorities are the residents of New Street, Brighton. It is ranked 223rd on the Australian level crossing assessment model (ALCAM) list — that is right; our rail safety experts tell us that there are 222 busier or more dangerous crossings throughout Victoria. When the budget priorities were being set no-one could accuse the member for Brighton of being caught napping. Make no mistake about it: \$2 million has already been allocated but the road will cost tens of millions to grade separate, and we will hold every government member accountable for unfunded crossings in their electorates that are higher on the Australian level crossing assessment model list that they claim there are insufficient funds to fix.

This government will wear this outrageous boondoggle like a crown of thorns. The chasm between rhetoric and reality is no wider than in the government's claims about infrastructure. Like a bawdy burlesque dancer, the government has taken to teasing Victorians. A hint of a road here, a glimpse of rail there, a peek of a port and a flash of a tunnel over there. Take the \$15 million — —

Mr Andrews — You better stop there, mate!

Mr HOLDING — You must leave something for the imagination. Take the \$15 million for the so-called

east–west link. This is a ploy, not a plan; it is a tactic, not a tunnel. Industry sources tell me that \$15 million buys approximately 15 metres of this \$5 billion to \$7 billion project. Speaker, that will get you and me from your chair to the front door of the chamber — just! Trust me, I measured it this morning. This is typical of the government. The then opposition gave a shout out to all sorts of communities that a myriad big ticket projects stood a chance of being funded if this government were elected.

The people of Geelong were wooed with the promise to relocate Melbourne's car trade to the port of Geelong, providing a thousand jobs and injecting \$200 million into the local economy. The Minister for Ports even put on a shindig and issued the obligatory press release marked with the 'Policy implemented' branding iron. Then yesterday there was the admission, snuck out under the cover of the budget, that the government has abandoned this idea. I think the branding iron will be waiting for the minister the next time he visits Geelong. There is no car trade and, oh, by the way, there is still no Red Bull air race.

In Doncaster and in Rowville we see the same choreography. There is the illusion of action — corridors, consultations, workshops and working groups — but there is no cash and there are no jobs. While the government brags of its record infrastructure program, the truth is that the Treasurer has turned off the tap on new capital works. Three-quarters of the capital works that will be under way in Victoria over the next year are the result of projects started by the Labor government. While the Treasurer wearies Victorians with his contradictory boast of a record in infrastructure investment, for which we are supposed to be thankful, and unsustainable debt, for which Labor is supposed to be blamed, he would do well to remember that Labor's projects represent the last vestige of a Victorian jobs plan.

Meanwhile Victorians wait for the second Geelong Hospital. Thirty thousand kids are being forced to wait even longer for the Monash Children's hospital. The people of Bendigo are still waiting for the additional \$81 million for their hospital. The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital has received a minuscule \$2 million of a promised \$165 million. These were all solemn promises made by this government in the lead-up to the last election. None of them was properly funded; none of them is close to being delivered. I am sure the Premier now hopes that Victorians have forgotten the very first answer he gave in this place after being elected. He said:

... the coalition was elected by the Victorian people with a promise that it would deliver on all its election commitments, and indeed that is what we intend to do.

In his own words this was to be a demonstration of his integrity. It was Shirley MacLaine who said, 'Never trust a man when he's in love, drunk or running for office'.

But when our Treasurer makes a promise, let us be frank, he does not mess around! Caveats and qualifications are not for him! Let me take us back to before the election. The scene is the parliamentary dining room. The cast is an intrepid reporter from the *Australian Financial Review* and our very own Treasurer before his admission to the witness protection program. There was the promise, when the now Treasurer said:

We are happy to look at savings but we will not include under any circumstance any reduction to the public service.

He went on to say:

So our commitment to the public service is rock solid, no ifs, no buts, no job losses in the public service. So we're clear on that, aren't we?

We are crystal clear. But the sceptical interviewer pushed on, and our Treasurer was not going to resort to lily-livered weasel words. He insisted:

There will be no job losses in the public service ...

Later he repeated:

There will be no job losses in the public service.

Just to be sure, in case the pesky interviewer had missed it, he finished with:

Thank you, I just want to make sure the point is clear.

Speaker this was not a case of saying 'the cheque is in the mail', 'my diet starts on Monday' or even 'I'll call you'; this was the now Treasurer of Victoria. There he was, 12 months later, handing down the midyear financial update and announcing 3600 voluntary redundancies from the public service. The promise was broken. Fetch the branding iron!

You would think that having so comprehensively and emphatically broken this promise, he would have exercised just a modicum of caution as he returned to the scene of the crime. But our Treasurer is nothing if not a slow learner. Firstly, he promised that the 3600 was it — finito, done — and, secondly, that at least Victorians could take comfort from his promise that there would be no forced redundancies. So with two new promises to break, our Treasurer feverishly set to

work. Tuesday's budget contained another 600 job cuts and the humiliating admission from the Treasurer that when voluntary packages are not enough, the government will resort to forced redundancies. Three promises were emphatically made, and three promises were emphatically broken.

Unlike the member for Frankston, I am not often given to quoting scripture, but was it not Jesus who said to Peter that before the rooster crowed he would betray him three times? Our Treasurer was so quick out of the blocks that the poor rooster had not even cleared his throat before he had managed to break the one promise three different ways. As John Ferguson noted in the *Australian* yesterday, 'Wells seems to be making a habit of telling big-time fibs'.

If Victorians were under any illusion as to the confusion that inhabits the mind of our state Treasurer, then they only had to listen to the nonsense that he proffered yesterday during question time, when in the one answer he attacked Labor's so-called 'structural deficit' but boasted of his own wafer-thin surplus, which by his own definition is itself a structural deficit.

I will finish where I started, with the priceless words of Groucho Marx: he 'may talk like an idiot and look like an idiot, but don't let that fool you — he really is an idiot'. This is a budget that fails Victorians. It fails Victorians desperate for a job. It fails our most vulnerable. It fails to keep promises solemnly made. It fails to provide leadership. It fails to live up to our state's historic promise that each generation passes to the next a belief that our state can lead the nation. This budget contains no jobs, no heart, no vision and no hope.

Mr RYAN (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — It is my great pleasure to join the debate in relation to what is a budget for the times. It is tough, but it is responsible. It returns a surplus, and it protects our all-important AAA rating. It was wonderful to see so quickly after the budget was announced that both Standard and Poor's and Moody's were quick to confirm our all-important AAA rating.

The budget pegs future debt, which is also an important feature of our future in Victoria. It builds budget capacity, which is vitally important for us. It is built around efficiency and productivity, instances and elements of budgetary policy that were fundamentally abandoned by the failed Labor government. It enables economic growth for Victoria. It provides funding across all sectors of our state's finances. It provides a strong focus on growing our international markets, and that is a vitally important part of our future here in

Victoria. It restores the budget fundamentals that were abandoned by the failed Labor government over its 11 dark years, when it purported to represent the government of Victoria. The budget creates jobs right across our state. Very importantly, it is a budget which will run on budget.

One of the very interesting aspects of the budget papers, among many others, is contained in the 'Operating statement analysis' at page 38 of budget paper 2. Members should note the comparison between this year and last year. The 'Operating statement analysis' for 2011–12 tells us that last year's budget was \$47 298.8 million. What is the revised budget for 2011–12 that appears in this year's budget papers? It is \$46 749.1 million. What does that tell us? It tells us that the first budget delivered by the Baillieu government was a budget that we honoured. We ran the budget on budget. That is significant because for 11 years the Labor Party in government in Victoria did not do that once. Not once did the Labor Party while in government in Victoria ever run a budget on budget. Many would say, 'Why is that so?'. The simple answer is: because Labor cannot manage money.

The other reason is that Labor cannot manage major projects. It simply does not know how to do it. It could not run a chook raffle. The bottom line of leaving Labor in government, had that happened, would have been that we in Victoria would have been in a disastrous state. We well understand when you look at these budget papers that they tell the fact of the matter, and the fact of the matter is that we would have been staring at a recurrent budget loss of about \$4 billion in next year's budget had it been that Labor stayed in government in Victoria. The Labor Party is an absolute scandal. It is a disgrace. It squandered billions of dollars over the course of its 11 failed years. Victorians are now left to pick up the pieces.

You do not need to look only at Victoria; you need only to look up and down the east coast of Australia and you need only to look federally to see that the story is exactly the same wherever you go. Queensland is staring at a \$2.8 billion deficit this year and a debt of \$65 billion, blowing out to \$85 billion. Make no mistake: that is where we would have gone had it been that Labor won the election back in 2010. Just look at New South Wales, South Australia and the disaster that passes as a federal Labor government at the moment and you will see that the story every time, without fail, is exactly the same: Labor cannot manage money. Fortuitously the people of Victoria saw the reality of this back in November 2010 and elected a coalition government to address this issue, and that is exactly what we have done. We ran our first budget on budget.

Now we have a budget that is tough, responsible and appropriate for the times.

You need only look at some of the efforts of that failed, miserable bunch to highlight their inability to run major projects. We have just had a dissertation from the member for Lyndhurst. I think it would have been more appropriate for the comedy festival than as a response to the budget. You need to be responsible if you are going to make a response to the state budget. That was far from being responsible. This is the same member who signed off on the desalination plant, which every day for the next 28 years will cost Victorians \$2 million. When Victorians go to sleep each night they think: we have burnt another \$2 million courtesy of the failed Labor government, courtesy of the member for Lyndhurst. This is the famed Labor legacy that we are supposed to have, courtesy of the member for Lyndhurst.

What about the regional rail link? We have had to completely re-scope it. The bunch over on the other side proceeded with this development, the only problem being that they forgot a couple of major components, one of which was the rolling stock that was supposed to run on it. How can you run a regional rail link when you do not have any rolling stock? Only the Labor Party would concoct such a stupid situation. Myki is another absolute scandal. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured down the hole, and we have had to re-scope the whole thing to make it work. What about the ICT programs? We had the report from the Auditor-General that they were supposed to cost \$1.4 billion but have ended up costing \$2.7 billion. We burnt another \$1.3 billion over 10 projects, and half of them still do not work properly. This is the Labor legacy that they say they are so proud of. What about the loss of opportunity in the sale of the gaming machine entitlements? Another \$3 billion out the back door.

What about the Melbourne market scandal? We have left the Minister for Major Projects to pick up the pieces there — \$10 billion-plus at the very least, and would we not love to have that money back. This is only one of the pivotal areas around which this rather difficult budget had to be framed. It was framed around the fundamental principle: Labor cannot manage money. And what do we see from Labor members now, day after day, and night after night? They are up speaking in the adjournment debate, whingeing and moaning and carping, being miserable and calling for funding of the roads and the schools and the health services — all the things that they could never do over 11 years. Yet we are supposed to pick up the pieces in 5 minutes, when the reality is — and they know it — that, comparing the

budgetary figures we inherited in 2010 and the figures now, we have about \$8 billion less than was apparently available to us — in addition to what they left us with by way of legacy.

That is the second aspect which is relevant to the framing of this vitally important budget. The fundamentals under which we went into the campaign and came into government have changed radically. The global financial crisis has struck us. We have lost enormous amounts of money through the GST payment decreases and the lack of stamp duty, but the member for Lyndhurst stands here and says, 'It was the same for us. We faced all sorts of dilemmas'. The fact is that over the 11 years of that failed Labor government it nearly drowned in rivers of gold flowing into the Treasury. It had cash flowing in the likes of which we had not seen in Victoria before, and it still could not make it work. And why was that? Because Labor cannot manage money.

On top of that, the member for Lyndhurst conveniently forgets to mention that the crisis that members of the former government say caused money to fall short of expectations was ameliorated by the fact that the federal government came to the party with about \$13 billion in the so-called stimulus payments. Somehow or other the member for Lyndhurst seemed to have overlooked that issue as he was talking. We have been left in the situation of having to introduce a tough but responsible budget, but despite all of that there are major benefits for Victorians. We have a major infrastructure program throughout our state; we have something of the order of \$41 billion in total infrastructure projects running through our public sector.

Job creation is an absolute centrepiece of what we are doing. We have made a 3 per cent cut in WorkCover premiums — something the member for Lyndhurst seemed to forget. We are recruiting the 1700 front-line operational police, and they are being deployed right across the state. The all-important protective services officers (PSOs), who opposition members continue to ridicule, are being rolled out. Only last night I was down at Flinders Street station talking with them, and what a great job they are doing. It is interesting to see also that it has become a bipartisan policy, because who do we hear screaming every other day to have PSOs in their particular locations? Victorian Labor Party members. They are the ones who want the PSOs.

Mr Merlino interjected.

Mr RYAN — The member for Monbulk says, 'We did not oppose the legislation'. He is priceless — the

'plastic policemen' — and they will never forget it, make no mistake.

In relation to the bushfire initiatives, there is another \$33 million, with \$20.6 million for the buyback scheme — another initiative that Labor would never undertake. It abandoned those people. We have a buyback scheme which is rolling along well. Emergency services — another \$57 million. We will build more fire stations in the regions of Victoria in particular, and for those who were at the Regional Victoria Living Expo on the weekend, what a wonderful three days it was. I do not think I saw any members of the opposition at the expo, because they have no idea where the regions are. The events arising from the ShopScience survey are a great outcome. Eleven per cent of Melburnians are looking at moving to the regions in the next three years — and why would they not? Another 39 per cent were more generally considering doing it.

This is a great budget for the times. Time is against my being able to go through all the many initiatives that benefit regional Victoria. They include a package worth approximately \$200 million for agriculture, including the Future Farming plan and the retention of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. What a great initiative that is on behalf of the Baillieu government and the people of regional Victoria. They appreciate the continuing benefits derived from that fund.

There is also \$225 million for our schools and \$199 million for hospital upgrades. Over at Warrnambool the new radiotherapy centre is going ahead. Charlton will be getting a new hospital — what a great thing that is. At Castlemaine we are building the facilities I committed to during a visit there in the campaign and which is a great initiative. This year at Leongatha, in my own electorate, we will begin building a new hospital. In Echuca work is under way, and at Swan Hill work will be undertaken. In addition to all of this, \$172 million has been allocated for rail track maintenance together with the acquisition of the new carriages and rolling stock. All these things will be rolled out under this budget.

There is a \$366 million package for the most vulnerable kids in our state in response to the Cummins inquiry. More of the multidisciplinary centres and more police are being rolled out throughout the regions — in Bendigo, Mildura, Frankston, Geelong, Ballarat and the Latrobe Valley. All these are initiatives of this government in the most difficult of financial conditions. Road funding in vast proportions is going through different parts of the regions.

This is a budget for the times. We recognise that you have to take the tough decisions when you have financial difficulties upon you, as we have. We are the government of the finest state in the greatest nation on the face of the planet. We Australians are 22 million people in this island nation of ours. Victoria has a great capacity to make contributions in time to come, and we will do it. Labor cannot manage money; this coalition government can. We have proven already that we can, and we will do it. Victorians know it needs to be done, and they can be guaranteed that we will continue to lead the way.

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) — I rise to talk on the 2012 budget. I will focus my comments on education. The budget for education is devastating for the second year in a row. A total of \$481 million was slashed from the budget last year with a glib assurance — quickly exposed for the lie that it was — that front-line services would not be affected. A total of \$48 million was cut from funding for the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL). The Reading Recovery program has been slashed. The Young Readers program was abolished. This year there is a further \$74 million cut to the education budget, and again the cuts are callously targeting the most needy in our community. Why would you target the most vulnerable?

The savage cuts last year impacted on both young children beginning their education and VCAL and VCE (Victorian certificate of education) students in secondary schools. Young children whose reading is not up to the required level when they begin prep and grade 1 have not been immune. The northern and western regions of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development cut Reading Recovery tutors — and that is a fact. More than 20 000 VCAL students, many of whom would be lost to education were it not for this alternative to VCE, have not been immune. Schools have been so desperate to cover the \$48 million cut so that VCAL can continue that they have reduced the number of literacy specialist teachers and numeracy tutors, increased class sizes, gone into debt, employed fewer teachers or reduced their hours, cut music programs or reduced the number of maintenance staff. Front-line services and opportunities at both primary and secondary level have been affected.

This year the Baillieu government's target is 40 000 of our most needy families. I am talking about the scrapping of the School Start bonus and the slashing of the education maintenance allowance (EMA). The School Start bonus was a \$300 payment for families to assist them with the costs associated with their child starting prep or year 7 — that is, the purchase of uniforms and books. It reflected the additional costs that

parents face when their children first start primary school or move on to secondary school. The Premier's extraordinary answer to questions about this yesterday — that the School Start bonus and the EMA have been merged — is a load of rubbish. The School Start bonus has been scrapped — it has gone. I encourage the Premier to have a look at the website of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, where it says 'the School Start bonus ... will be discontinued'.

Over the last two days the Premier has been found out again and again. He has no grasp of the detail of his own budget. The logic that the Premier applied when quizzed on the radio was to say that he had received the School Start bonus and he did not need it. He did not need it, therefore the program was abolished. Yet the government addressed the issue of eligibility for the School Start bonus last year. Having identified the most needy in Victoria for the School Start bonus, the next year he ripped it away from the 40 000 families in Victoria that need that support the most. It is a disgraceful and callous decision.

The Minister for Education should hang his head in shame that he was so weak and so pathetically impotent at the cabinet table and in the budget and expenditure review committee process that he could not even mount a defence against this savage cut. At least the Minister for Higher Education and Skills had the decency to acknowledge the fact that TAFE has been screwed by this government. As the shadow Treasurer said in his contribution earlier, it has been the single largest cut to TAFE in the state's history. Rather than contemplating retirement and sharing his 'emotions of shock, incredulity, disbelief and anger', he should have done his job and protected the TAFE sector. The Minister for Education and the Minister for Higher Education and Skills did not.

The two education ministers should take account of the comments of the Holmesglen Institute of TAFE chief, Bruce Mackenzie, who is quoted in today's *Age* as saying, 'This is an attack on the most vulnerable people', and, 'The government doesn't have a mandate to smash the system'. For the Premier these are not 40 000 low-income families struggling to do their best to provide their children with the best education opportunities they can; these are a 'cohort'. Has any premier been more disengaged than Ted Baillieu? He called them a cohort, but they are not — they are 40 000 families that have been screwed by the Baillieu government.

This brings us to the education maintenance allowance. The EMA is the assistance for low-income families to

cover the cost of a child's education up to the age of 16. It is split 50-50 between the component that goes to the family and the component that goes to the school. If you go to any school website, you will see it explained quite clearly that the EMA is for a student and that it is the total of two components — for example, in 2012 for a secondary school student eligible for the EMA it is \$470 — \$235 to the parent and \$235 to the school.

The Orwellian response of the Premier is to say that the EMA for parents is increasing. Let us test the maths. The parent component of the EMA increases from \$117.50 to \$200 for preps. It then reverts back to \$150. Previously a parent of a prep student would receive the School Start bonus of \$300 plus \$170.50 from the EMA, so that would be a total of \$470.50. Now they will get \$200. That is a cut of \$270.50 for a low-income family. Previously a parent of a year 7 student would receive the School Start bonus of \$300 plus the EMA of \$235. Now they will get \$300. That is a cut of \$235 for a low-income family. The increase in the parent component does not go anywhere near covering the loss of the School Start bonus.

I would think, Deputy Speaker, that you would be interested in this because I know that your electorate covers many disadvantaged communities and there would be schools in your electorate where a high percentage of students receive the EMA. Every single one of those students will be receiving less money due to the budget that has just been handed down.

Let us consider the impact of the 25 per cent cut to the school component, which is treated as the second part of a pool of money for students of low-income families. I want to do this by way of example. Delacombe Primary School in Ballarat has about 80 per cent of its kids on the EMA. The school receives \$117.50 per student. It uses about \$30 for art and craft supplies, \$62 for swimming lessons and \$25 for its kitchen garden program. The students participate in these activities because the EMA covers the cost that low-income families would struggle to meet. That is what the Baillieu government is cutting.

The Olympic Village junior campus at Charles La Trobe College has 97 students in the P-4 campus, and 85 per cent of those are EMA recipients. This school uses its EMA component to fund the purchase of books and computers and to fund excursions. If it were not for the EMA, parents at this school would be required to fund these things for their kids, and it would struggle to do so. Ninety per cent of the students at Carlton Primary School are on the EMA. This is what the Baillieu government is cutting. The callous cuts to the EMA program will have a devastating impact on

schools across Victoria, and for that decision alone the Baillieu government is to be condemned.

The attack on our education system, and particularly on our most vulnerable, does not end there. In 2008 the former Labor government provided \$33 million over four years to expand the student support services program. This was a significant boost to that delivery of psychology, social work, counselling to at-risk kids and speech pathology. In this budget under the strengthening student support packages only \$8.2 million is provided over four years. There was a \$33 million boost under Labor, and there is \$8 million under the Baillieu government.

Last year it was VCAL and Reading Recovery that were targeted; this year it is low-income families who are doing it the toughest and students who rely on additional supports like counselling and speech pathology to get them through their school years. The fact is that the Baillieu government targets those who need the support most, be it in education, be it in concessions — pensioners are getting a real cut in their concessions — or be it in terms of refugee support packages, as the shadow Treasurer has pointed out.

I turn now to capital. Let us put capital expenditure in Victoria in some historical context. Let us look at the last two decades. Under the Kennett government, from 1996 to 1999 capital expenditure averaged \$129 million per year. Under Labor between 2000 and 2006, our first two terms, capital expenditure averaged \$291 million. In Labor's last four-year term an average of \$469 million was spent on capital as it embarked on the delivery of the Victorian schools plan. In addition to that there was a \$2.5 billion investment by federal Labor as part of the Building the Education Revolution project. We have gone from an average of \$469 million capital for our schools to \$208 million last year and \$200 million this year. This is effectively a return to the days of the Kennett government. These are comparable to Kennett levels of investment in school infrastructure.

When we were in government education was our no. 1 priority. It was not rhetoric; we delivered and we will always deliver on education. Outside of the family, quality education is the single most important determinant in transforming people's lives — break out of poverty and achieve their dreams. We are not going to cast VCAL students onto the scrap heap. We are not going to cast off kids who struggle with reading. We are not going to put them on the scrap heap. We are not going to rip away the EMA and support for the 40 000 most vulnerable families in Victoria. That is not what Labor does. Of the schools that did manage to get some capital in this year's budget, 70 per cent were in

Liberal or Nationals seats and 30 per cent were in Labor seats. Obviously they did not take heed of the advice of the Victorian Association of State Secondary School Principals, which said on 18 April:

We need to have a more independent way of approaching funding and taking the politics out of it.

Of the many schools that missed out on funding in this severely reduced capital program, 22 were the subject of coalition promises that it is still to deliver. Make no mistake: no money this year means that the facilities that have not been funded will not be completed by the 2014 election, which is an absolute breach of trust. Every single member opposite who did not deliver should hang their heads in shame. As Apollo Bay P-12 College principal John McConchie says, they would be 'devastated'. Education has been screwed by the Baillieu government.

Ms ASHER (Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business) — For many years, during the course of the budget debate in this chamber, both in government and in opposition, I have followed a member who has now retired, Rob Hulls, the former member for Niddrie, and I cannot help but make a comparison between the performance of Rob Hulls, whom I normally followed, and the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I must say that the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition has neither bluster nor content. We saw 10 minutes of angry ant and then 5 minutes of petering out. That is the problem with this opposition — a lot of angry ant and then a lot of petering out.

The facts of the matter remain: in framing the 2012-13 budget we have had to take into account the parameters we inherited and the parameters of federal-state relations. And we must never forget Labor's legacy. We have seen significant wastage of money — and that has been outlined most adequately by the Deputy Premier — and there have been a range of lapsing programs with which the government has had to grapple. On top of that we have had Labor's federal hit — a \$6.1 billion reduction in GST revenues over four years from 2012-13. Most importantly we have inherited an unsustainable budget. The budget we inherited from Labor had expenditure growth of 7.3 per cent over the 10 years before we came to office compared with revenue growth of 6.9 per cent. A state government cannot maintain that type of revenue growth versus that type of expenditure growth. We have had unbelievable growth in the public sector that has been well in excess of population growth, and that is unsustainable. On top of that we are experiencing

significant economic challenges internationally and a very high Australian dollar.

It is absolutely amazing in that context, as members would know, to look at the figures in relation to the coalition's election commitments. We made \$5.2 billion worth of recurrent election commitments, and in this budget we have now delivered \$5.18 billion in relation to those election commitments. In terms of capital, we made \$2.4 billion worth of election commitments. With this budget we have delivered \$2.19 billion in relation to those election commitments. This is a government that is delivering on the recurrent and capital election commitments it made to the electorate which put it into office in 2010.

In terms of my own portfolio, we have delivered on a number of election promises in this budget as well. We have delivered on the Victoria Prize and the Victoria Fellowships. We have delivered on a showcasing innovations policy to showcase new inventions in science and technology. In terms of election promises, we have delivered on the VESKI Innovation Fellowships, a \$2 million project to allow mentoring of secondary students and more recognition in that area. In terms of Victorian research scholarships, we have delivered on that election promise.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is not interested in hearing about the coalition government delivering on its election promises, but I will continue. There are so many election promises that I will keep going. We have delivered on our promise to provide Victorian screen industry fellowships for film and television practitioners to allow people in those industries to gain overseas experience. A raft of election commitments have been delivered in this year's budget.

Let us turn to some new funding in areas in my portfolio. In terms of innovation, we have funded — and I thank the commonwealth for its contribution — the synchrotron. Labor left us with a lapsing program; it left us with no money to fund the synchrotron. Former Premier John Brumby rushed off and built the synchrotron; he would not wait for a national facility to be funded. However, Labor did not provide the money to run the synchrotron after it left office. There is \$26 million over four years to run the synchrotron, which should be a commonwealth piece of infrastructure, and I thank the commonwealth for its negotiations with us to keep the synchrotron going. As part of another new policy, the government is announcing innovation vouchers worth \$5 million to encourage Victorian small and medium size enterprises to improve their business capacity to innovate. Most vouchers will be valued at between \$20 000 and

\$50 000, and there will be, I hope, a significant take-up of the new policy outlined in the budget.

We have also outlined a new Victorian international engagement strategy, which I have touched on previously in this place, worth \$50 million over four years. One of the key pillars of what the government is trying to do is to find new markets. In the current economic climate our businesses need to find new markets, and many of our small businesses need assistance in finding these new markets. In this regard we have seen successful missions to India, the Middle East and China. This funding will contribute to outbound missions, with participation by smaller businesses being subsidised in part. Inbound missions will also receive assistance so that some of the small businesses that cannot participate in outbound missions will be able to participate when inbound missions come to Victoria. We hope to have a vastly increased number of companies participating, and we hope to boost exports and foreign investment in the state of Victoria. Our idea as part of this program is to ensure that businesses have the relevant skills. This program will also fund our new business offices in Mumbai and Beijing which have been announced by the Premier. The government aims to have 2400 businesses benefiting from this program each year.

In terms of small business, I am pleased to announce the latest figures showing that small business numbers in Victoria have increased since June 2009. We have seen an increase of 29 055 small businesses, which means we now have 522 000 small businesses in Victoria. Most importantly there are now 190 000 small businesses in Victoria that employ people.

Small businesses have been the subject of a number of initiatives in this budget. First of all we have established the small business success map, allocating \$6 million over four years, which will assist growth-oriented small businesses, and we have funded the continuation of Victoria's Small Business Festival, with \$6.1 million over four years. My colleague the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade also has a raft of programs to fund his new manufacturing strategy, and some of those are directed at small businesses. Indeed there is a \$9 million program over four years with support for small manufacturers called Building Innovative Small Manufacturers. Through that program we hope to assist 800 small businesses in 2012–13. There is assistance to medium size businesses as well. WorkCover premiums have been cut by 3 per cent. All these matters are very important.

In tourism, we have put additional money towards air service attraction, and regional tourism will receive

\$13.2 million over four years. It is an extremely challenging environment for tourism at the moment, and those members who were listening to the Treasurer's budget speech will recall that he made specific mention of the high Australian dollar, which is placing significant pressure on Victoria's manufacturing, tourism and education sectors. Of course that is reflected in the KPIs (key performance indicators).

My opponent, the member for Essendon — and I have to make this comment — saw those KPIs written out nicely for him on page 91 of budget paper 3, and he copied them out in a press release. Huge research! And he said, 'Look! Look! We've got some problems in tourism'. It was pointed out on page 2 of the Treasurer's budget speech that the Australian dollar is impacting on tourism. I note that the member for Essendon has issued five press releases in 18 months. On 2 March 2011 he issued a press release on shop trading, on 2 June 2011 he issued a press release on public holidays, on 28 July 2011 he issued a press release on tourism and on 9 August 2011 he issued a press release on major events. And then it appears that the member for Essendon collapsed with exhaustion, because he did not issue a press release from August 2011 until this week, when he copied out a page of the budget figures. That was very well spotted by the member for Essendon; however, as I said right up-front, there are a couple of things we actually had to say about this.

I also wish to draw the Parliament's attention to the report of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee tabled in April that deals with the 2009–10 and 2010–11 financial performance outcomes. PAEC — which, when I last looked, had Labor members on it — required that instead of setting target ranges, such as tourism figures, as has been done previously, the government should set one figure. In accordance with the request of PAEC, the government has provided one figure. That is a responsible, conservative figure, and I for one hope we are able to achieve results beyond that particular figure. I contrast this with the situation when domestic tourism unravelled under the Labor government. What did it do? It removed the key performance indicator (KPI) from the budget papers completely. It was not transparent; it was not open; it sought to hide it. I have reinstated transparent KPIs. We have been up-front and honest, and the KPIs reflect the Treasurer's speech.

We have also funded the investment support program, which was completely and utterly unfunded under the ALP. This is the program where we compete for business with other states. Under the ALP it was

unfunded and completely reliant on Treasurer's advances. We have put some money into that to ensure that Victoria can remain competitive.

I am delighted to see the member for Monbulk at the table. In an adjournment debate some time ago, months after all our members, including the member for Gembrook and Ed O'Donohue, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the upper house, had asked me for funding for Puffing Billy, the member for Monbulk twigged, and he came into this chamber and asked for some funding. I am happy to advise the member for Gembrook and Ed O'Donohue that \$4.4 million has been provided over four years for Puffing Billy, and I am very happy to acknowledge that the member for Monbulk's late contribution played absolutely no role in this funding. Thank you to the member for Gembrook for that.

I want to conclude by noting that Brighton Secondary College will have a new science and technology facility. Five million dollars was allocated in the budget last year for a new facility. The current facility was built in the 1950s and reminds me very much of — in fact, it is exactly the same as — the science facilities at the government high school I attended in the 1960s and 70s. Labor neglected that school completely and utterly. In 2013 there will be \$4.698 million for Brighton Secondary College, which was massively neglected by the Labor Party. Not one cent came from the Labor Party for new facilities for that school. I am delighted to be part of a coalition government that is assisting schools that have been run down for many, many years and neglected by the Labor Party for one reason — they are in Liberal electorates. A constituent of mine, the member for Broadmeadows, has just walked into the chamber. I am sure he would be delighted that funding is going to Brighton Secondary College, which is just down the road from where he lives. I am sure he will applaud that, and I am delighted to support the current budget.

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — The P-plates are well and truly off. It is the Liberal Party's second crack at a very important state budget. Once again, commuters have looked to see whether or not the Minister for Public Transport will make good on his commitment to fix the problems in the public transport system. Remember, his commitment to commuters was unambiguous. He was not only the man for the job but also the man who had in large part delivered the Liberal Party its chance to once again govern in Victoria.

Every budget poses a number of significant tests for ministers. Unfortunately for commuters, what this budget reveals about the Minister for Public Transport

is that he would struggle to pass even a blood test, much less the tests posed by the state budget. Let us have a look at the tests that have been placed before him. The first is the test set by commuters, and it is simply this — has the minister made it easier for me and my family to use public transport, or has the situation worsened under the Liberals? The second test is one set by independent umpires like the Auditor-General, who speak on our behalf and call on government to put public interests ahead of political interests. The third test, and perhaps the most telling of all, is the test that the minister set for himself when he spoke about Labor's last budget when he was in opposition. Unfortunately this government's second budget, like the one before it, has failed every single one of these tests. It has failed the test set by commuters, it has failed the test set by the independent umpire, the Auditor-General, and indeed it has failed the test set by the minister himself when he was in opposition.

Unfortunately the Liberal Party's own budget papers confirm that commuters will see no immediate benefits or significant improvements in their services. That is why on 2 May the minister's budget copped the *Age* headline 'Little relief for Metro commuters', and the following commentary in the same article:

Transport advocates have slammed the budget for its lack of investment in improving service delivery or reducing overcrowding that plagues passengers daily.

There are no additional trams, metropolitan trains or buses, and even the promise of extra V/Line carriages looks somewhat shady when the actual number being provided is conspicuously absent from the budget papers, along with their expected delivery date. The head of V/Line called for 40 new carriages at the very least, but in truth, as with so many other projects in the state, the last carriage was delivered thanks to Labor. No rail lines are to be extended, and no trams lines either. Families living in our growth corridors will simply have to make do with what they have got so far from this Liberal government — and that is absolutely nothing. Furthermore, there have been cuts to bus services.

Like so many commuters, I was hopeful that the announcements that were made over the weekend in the lead-up to the budget were a taste of what was to come, that all would be revealed come budget day on how the minister was going to make good on his promise to fix the problems in public transport, but there was simply nothing there. Sure, the minister reannounced some programs he had announced last year, like the Avalon rail study, the study into train services between Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, the new station at

Grovedale, the upgrade of Talbot station, the level crossings in Mitcham and Springvale et cetera. All of these were spruiked last year, but there is nothing new in any of this.

We all know that the significant projects for Premier Ted Scissorhands to open were initiated by Labor, and the pipeline of projects is now empty. I guess the Minister for Public Transport had little choice. He had to rebadge what was old as new, because he had once again failed to deliver on a vision, or for that matter to even have a vision or plan about how to make things better. Instead we have yet another study and another opportunity for the minister to raise expectations, and yet again he has simply failed to meet them. Millions of dollars were spent on consultants — in fact over \$100 million — all so that the minister could say he had fixed the problems, when we all know the promise should have read, 'We cannot fix the problems, but we will certainly study them to death'.

The second important test was set by the Auditor-General, who highlighted that funding for public transport infrastructure had stalled under the Liberal government and that another \$1 billion at the very least needed to be added to meet future patronage demands. The budget papers reveal that the Liberal government has provided a paltry \$397 million for new infrastructure — that is a whopping 80 per cent cut from the \$1.99 billion allocated by Labor in its last budget. Not only has the Liberal government failed to match Labor's investment, it has fallen even further behind where the Auditor-General believes the government needs to be. I am certain that the Auditor-General will have a bit to say about what has been announced when the majority of this spend is revealed to be somewhat dodgy in its presentation in the budget papers.

The third test, and perhaps the most telling of them all, is the test that the minister set for himself when he was in opposition speaking about Labor's last budget. He said:

Elections, policies and budgets are all about one thing and one thing alone — that is, trust.

He went on to say:

... the community will start to look back at this government's commitments and question its ability to deliver on the projects it has promised ...

Using the minister's own performance measures of trust and competency, how should we grade his second budget? On the question of trust, how can we trust a minister who says one thing in opposition and then does the complete opposite in government?

Prior to the last election the Minister for Public Transport indicated that myki ought to be scrapped. At every opportunity open to him the minister sank the boots into the ticketing system and deliberately gave Victorians every impression that if the Liberals were elected, myki would be dropped. After becoming minister, at his first opportunity, what did the minister do? According to him, myki was so bad we had to keep it. This breathtaking hypocrisy ratted out voters who supported the Liberals on the basis that myki would be scrapped. Whatever commuters thought about the ticketing system before it became Mulder's myki, no doubt they did not believe it could get any worse — but that is precisely what has happened. As well as scrapping single-use tickets and ripping top-up machines out of trams, this year's budget reveals that the cost of Mulder's myki has ballooned by a further \$166.5 million. Victorians have every right to feel betrayed by the Liberal minister for doing a complete 180-degree turn on myki.

Now we have the spectacle of a minister trying to get feedback. He is paying people to provide feedback on myki. Those that complain about Mulder's myki will be given free movie tickets, amongst other things. However, based on the number of phone calls to 774 ABC Melbourne this morning, all I can say is that the Liberal government had better start thinking about building more cinemas. Perhaps this is the government's cunning jobs plan!

What trust can we have in a minister who is too weak to restore funding to programs designed to improve access to public transport for those living with a disability? This was the same minister who in opposition talked big about his plans to right the wrongs that had occurred under Labor, yet in government slashed Labor's funding by over 84 per cent, and in this year's budget failed to restore that funding. What makes this massive cut even worse is that this minister was too weak to do the right and honourable thing and fess up and take responsibility for his decision. How can we trust a minister who in opposition was highly critical of Labor's premium station program, yet at the same time told the Public Transport Users Association that he would keep the program and then ended up cutting it in government? In this year's budget it has been confirmed that funding for the premium station program has been redirected to the bungled protective services officers initiative.

On the question of competency, what can be said about a minister who only paddles in the shallow end when it comes to delivering significant improvements to our public transport network and who instead offers up more studies, more money for consultants and who has

clearly forgotten that you cannot catch a study to work? With the over 80 per cent drop in funding for new public transport infrastructure, we now know that while other ministers were at the table arguing their case for projects in their portfolios, the Minister for Public Transport was cowering under his desk. We will never forget the minister sincerely telling us that Labor had failed to replace train lines that were 300 years old. What an oversight! According to the minister, those tracks had been laid before Captain Cook had arrived in this country! Nor will we forget his decision to continue to fund in this year's budget an upgrade to the New Street crossing in Brighton, despite the fact it was ranked 223rd behind hundreds of busier and more dangerous crossings right around the state.

This year's budget also confirms that the timetable changes, rubber-stamped by the minister, are the reason for the sudden performance improvements of Metro Trains Melbourne. The minister made it clear that when Metro added time to services, ran nearly two out of every three new peak hour services against the peak hour rush and skipped stations to help meet punctuality targets that he had no role to play in holding the operator to account. When payments instead of penalties were for the first time being given to Metro following the introduction of the new timetables, surely that was the time for the minister to wake up to himself. Now that Metro has lifted its profits by a percentage that would make any of the big four banks blush, surely it is the time for the minister to recognise his mistake, man up and set about fixing the timetable mess that he signed off on.

The minister has failed every test, including the one he set for himself. He has a huge task ahead of him if he is to turn this ship around. Looking at his form to date, the signs are not at all good. When he said that in just 11 months he had put public transport back to where it should be, the alarm bells certainly started ringing. Of course concerns about the minister have been raised before, well before this year's budget. Remember that this was the man who was seen as the Liberal Party's alternative leader. In fact when he was approached to take on the now Premier he showed his true colours, not by telling those who wanted to support him for the top job that he was not interested but by taking each and every one of these calls and feeding that information directly to the man they wanted to knock off. That cowardly and underhanded act has dogged him ever since, not just because of the act itself but because of what it said about his character.

Since becoming the Minister for Public Transport he has had so many chances to show that he is not a coward, that in fact he is up to the job of fixing public

transport in this state and that he is capable of showing real leadership, but at every single significant — or even insignificant — opportunity he has failed to be anything like the kind of minister this state and indeed this Premier so desperately need.

In truth it is ministers like the public transport minister who are part of the Premier's problem. There are serious doubts about the Premier, and a minister like the Minister for Public Transport only serves to reinforce those doubts. Sadly for the minister, while only a select few in the Liberal Party knew before, the whole state is now beginning to learn what those select few in the Liberal Party have known for a considerable period of time — that we have been delivered a state minister who is clearly not up to the job of fixing our public transport system. He has failed to realise the promises he has made and he has failed to meet the tests he set for himself, and public transport is clearly getting worse under the Liberals on his watch.

After raising expectations in the way he did, he then set about consistently dashing those expectations. There has been talk about studies, but not a single track or tramline has actually been laid or bus service et cetera delivered. All of these failures have done much to shake our confidence and commuters' confidence in the public transport minister's ability to fix the problems in this state.

The sorts of things he set as his tasks — his mission to fix public transport — before the election included some very great visions indeed: Rowville rail, Doncaster rail, Avalon, the link that was going to be there right across the state and the metro tunnel. All of these things have been talked about, yes — they have been talked about to death — but nothing has actually been delivered on his watch. In fact when he wrote to Infrastructure Australia he put to it that his no. 1 priority in fixing transport in this state was in fact a roads project, not a public transport project. It was the link between the Tullamarine Freeway and the Eastern Freeway that this minister determined was going to be his priority, and if he was going to seek funds from the federal government, that was the sort of funding he wanted to see.

We have seen reflected in the budget itself that, sure, there are a number of projects in our roads network that need to be addressed — network problems like the Chandler Highway bridge, which I spoke about earlier today. What has happened is that all of those projects have been either neglected or part funded, but funding for public transport has dropped off on the minister's watch. Given all that he said prior to the last election, all the promises he made, all of the expectations he

raised, you would think the Minister for Public Transport would be able to deliver just one thing, just one parcel of goodies for commuters right around this state, but unfortunately he has failed to do this at this time. I call on the minister to take action to fix the problems that he identified prior to coming to office and to get on with the job as he promised he would.

Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — It is a pleasure to rise to talk on the Victorian budget. This budget, this Baillieu government budget, delivers for all Victorians and particularly delivers for the agriculture and water sectors, which are the portfolios which I have the pleasure of holding in this current government. This budget is tough and responsible. It gives very clear signals to everyone about this government's agenda on building stronger budget capacity, on improving productivity in industry, on growing export markets and on providing support for industries that are in transition.

From an agricultural point of view it builds on last year's budget, which provided for the implementation this year of the marketing cooperative program to assist farmers who want to set up marketing cooperatives to help improve their negotiating strength, whether it be with the supermarkets in Australia or overseas markets into the future. It builds also on the commitment of the government, with the Rural Finance Corporation, to an increase in assistance to young farmers buying land. That will increase from a \$15 million program to a \$22.5 million program. It also builds on the great initiative from last year of providing stamp duty exemptions to assist young people buying their first block of land. That will be up to a \$12 million program. It also builds on a great program from last year that a lot of people are benefiting from in country Victoria, and that is the fox and wild dog bounty. Something like 40 000 fox scalps and 216 wild dog pelts have been handed in to date.

If you compare like with like in the agricultural portfolio — our agriculture and food industry plan compared with the previous government's Future Farming strategy — you see there is more money in this budget than there was in the previous government's. Like for like there is \$213 million in this budget compared with \$138 million from the previous government. It is interesting that the opposition's agriculture spokesman, the ex-Treasurer of Victoria, cannot add up. If you look at his press releases, you see that he has not done the numbers in the budget. That the ex-Treasurer cannot read a budget and cannot actually add up goes to show why the previous government of this state got into so much financial trouble. If you compare like with like, you see there is more money in

this budget for agriculture than there was in the previous government's budget in that particular area.

The important part of this is that it is ongoing funding. It is not just a matter of initiating short-term initiatives, grabbing a quick press release and moving on; this is ongoing funding for the department. That is a very important signal for the department in terms of how it invests in future research and development programs. As everyone would know, the exports of food and fibre out of this state in 2010–11 topped \$8 billion. This is one of the largest export industries in this state, and it is something we can all be very proud of when it comes to our country communities. The markets where that growth has come from are China, Japan, Indonesia and some of the other Asian countries. There is a growing middle class in those countries, and they have increased demand for protein, particularly for red meats and dairy products. There is going to be a food boom for those producers in Victoria who can take the opportunity offered by those markets.

Victoria is part of the national primary industries research development and extension framework, and the investment in this budget in the agriculture and food industry plan fits beautifully into that national framework. We are taking the lead in the dairy industry, we are taking the lead in some of the grain sectors, we are taking the lead in the lamb sector and we are taking the lead in parts of the horticulture sector. The investment in research in this budget will help the investment in that national framework in relation to which the research and development corporations are co-investing here in Victoria. More than 80 per cent of Australia's dairy exports come from Victoria. This is a great story for Victoria and particularly for country Victoria. As I have said in this place before, the greatest single user of the Melbourne container port is the dairy industry. The dairy industry and the entire agriculture industry welcomed the announcement of the Minister for Ports of the expansion at Webb Dock, something that is absolutely critical for agriculture and food and fibre producers here in Victoria, because that is their gateway to the export markets.

Victoria is a leader in the grains industry, particularly in the legumes sector — the lentils sector. Some significant investments have already taken place at Horsham, and the member for Lowan would have welcomed those, particularly the investment made in partnership with the Grains Research and Development Corporation to set up a national seed bank there. That is a great investment.

Mr Delahunty — Very well received.

Mr WALSH — And the additional money in this budget will be very well received in the grains industry.

There is the red meat industry, and Victoria is a leader in the lamb industry and in research and development for it. Additional money will go to Hamilton on top of the previous measure announced about lamb research there. In the horticulture industry we have a great story to tell about pears, and the research investment in this budget will help there as well. There is great work going on at the Tatura research institute. There is a good story to tell about investment in the stone fruit industry, particularly in the peach, nectarine and apricot sectors, and in the almond industry. There is a good budget story about additional investment in biosecurity — in making sure we protect the access of our producers to overseas markets. The Minister for Local Government has a particularly good story for farmers with the money she has in her area of the budget for the control of pest animals and weeds on roadsides.

I turn briefly to the water portfolio. There is new money in the budget for better management of water issues in this state. The drought may have broken, but we need to continue planning to make sure we are preparing for the next drought. As sure as we have floods in this state, we will have another drought sooner or later, and we need to keep preparing. There is money in the budget for the state groundwater bore network, something the previous government had let fall into disrepair because it had the view that it was never going to rain again and it was not needed. There is also money for capacity to manage groundwater. You may not be able to see groundwater, but we need to be able to manage it well. There is also money in the budget for managing environmental entitlements. I will give credit to the previous government — and we supported this at the time — for setting up the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. We needed to make sure there was money for that to function. One of the misconceptions of the previous government was that if you just add water, you solve environmental issues. You need to manage that water well, and there is money in this budget to manage Victoria's environmental water.

There is also some significant funding for particular projects. One of the election promises we made was to put money into fixing up the Yarrowee River, and that has been announced in this budget. There is another instalment in the allocations for fixing up Mordialloc Creek. The members for Mordialloc and Carrum will be particularly happy about the additional money to fulfil our commitment on the dredging of that creek. I had the pleasure of going down there last year with

those two members. It is a great community resource, and this money will help that project along.

There is money in the budget for simplifying the bulk water entitlement in Victoria, something that is very complex and needs to be simplified. There is money for additional work on what may or may not be a Murray-Darling Basin plan in the future. There is money for water law reform. The last time the Victorian Water Act 1989 had a significant rewrite was 1989, and there is a need to do that again and to simplify the act so that people actually understand it. There is money there for whole-farm plans, particularly in northern Victoria, where the irrigation upgrades are happening, to make sure there are synergies involving what is happening on farms and the upgrades to the irrigation system.

One of the great allocations in this budget is \$10 million to set up the Office of Living Victoria. That is a very clear commitment on the part of this government to having integrated water management in our cities, whether in Melbourne or in our regional cities. This builds on the \$50 million in last year's budget for setting up the Leading the Way — Liveable Victoria Fund to make sure we use our water better — to make sure we use rainwater, stormwater and recycled water for fit-for-purpose uses. This increases the livability of our cities and goes to reducing the heat bank effect through having greenery and moisture in the urban environment. It also assists the environment, because you do not get those large storm surges going down the creeks of Melbourne and our regional cities.

A very telling observation is that more water runs off Melbourne than the city consumes. The previous government ignored these issues for far too long. I repeat that more water runs off Melbourne than Melbourne consumes. This is a core plank for how we see future water management of this city, which will involve using stormwater, rainwater and recycled water for fit-for-purpose uses — not for drinking but to take the demand off the drinking system.

The telling issue here is that Labor ignored that and the Labor government built a desalination plant. I need to remind everyone what that desalination plant costs the people of Melbourne: \$2 million per day, every day for the next 27 years. That equates to \$400 per household per year for the next 27 years — the Holding desal tax. What is ironic about that is that in 2006 the then Premier, Steve Bracks, called desal a hoax, but members of the then Labor government rushed out and they have locked Victorians, in particular Melbourne water users, into paying \$400 for every household for every year for the next 27 years. It is an absolute

disgrace which proves, as Deputy Premier Peter Ryan said in his contribution, that members of the Labor Party cannot manage money and, more importantly, that they cannot manage major projects.

I will not talk about the farce that was the north-south pipeline, but what an absolute waste of three-quarters of a billion dollars!

I turn briefly to my electorate of Swan Hill and the budget. There is a good outcome for the electorate of Swan Hill. As everyone knows, there were significant floods in northern Victoria, particularly in January 2011. One of the towns that was significantly impacted by those floods was Charlton. Over time, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Health and I have been to Charlton, making a commitment to that community that we would not desert them in their hour of need and that we would rebuild the hospital there. So it was very pleasing to see in the budget that the Minister for Health has committed \$22.7 million to rebuild the hospital at Charlton. It is a great outcome for that community. Now when something new happens in Charlton, every step is part of the journey of not only rebuilding Charlton but making sure that Charlton is better into the future.

The other very pleasing announcement from the health point of view was the \$18 million in the budget to rebuild the aged-care facility at the Swan Hill hospital. Ministers have been there previously, and everyone was in heated agreement that of all the aged-care facilities that the government owns across Victoria that was the one that was probably in most need of an upgrade. The money is there now. The key thing now is that the commonwealth does the right thing next week and announces its share of the money for a full rebuild of that aged-care facility. That would be a great outcome for the community of Swan Hill.

The budget also has some significant announcements in relation to the Country Fire Authority (CFA), with new fire stations for Wilkur South, down near Warracknabeal, and Berriwillock, where the fire station will become the community centre in the future. For Buckrabanyule, which is a small community near Charlton, getting a new fire station is a good outcome. There will be a new fire station at Wycheproof. That builds on the announcement I had the pleasure of making last year on behalf of Peter Ryan that that will be a co-located facility for the State Emergency Service and the CFA. There will be a new fire station for Lake Charm and one also for Meering West, near Kerang.

I suppose the key message we need to give Victorians about this budget is that it is a budget for all Victorians.

All Victorians will benefit from having good, strong fiscal management in this state, compared with what we have had in the past 11 years. If people look at what is in the budget, they will see that there are benefits in it for everyone while making sure that we build stronger budget capacity, improve productivity in our industry — I have talked about how that will happen in the agriculture and water area — and grow our export markets. The \$50 million initiative to create access to export markets is a great one. There is particular support for industries that are in transition.

This is a budget that I am very proud to be part of delivering because it actually delivers for Victoria. It is a budget that is needed for the times. It is not a wasteful budget that is financially irresponsible as the budgets of previous governments were; it is fiscally responsible and tough but fair.

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the 2012–13 budget. This week members have heard a lot from those opposite about what a great budget this is. We have just heard from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, who said that this budget delivers for all Victorians. I am not sure whether he got a set of budget papers that are different from those the rest of the Victorian community got, but there is no way that this budget delivers for all Victorians.

What we have also heard a lot of this week is that it is everybody else's fault that we have a budget full of big cuts, with further job losses and increases in the cost of living for so many Victorians. The reality is that this is a bad budget for families, a bad budget for jobs, a bad budget for many of our regions and a bad budget for the environment, and it is a budget that will weaken, not strengthen, the Victorian economy.

The increases in fees and fines will see an increase in the cost of living for Victorian families, flying in the face of the commitment this government made at the last election to reduce the cost of living. To add to that injury, the real cut in this budget to concessions that will impact on so many low-income families is extraordinary. It is extraordinary to see the targeting of low-income families in our community.

This is a budget that will see even more public sector jobs go. Despite the government's claim that it is protecting front-line services, that is impossible given the number of jobs that are being cut from the public sector. In fact even according to the original announcement made by the Treasurer last year of 3600 jobs going, looking at just the Department of Sustainability and Environment already we have seen

biodiversity and coastcare jobs go. They are absolutely front-line workers.

The irony is that, despite the claim that this budget is putting the public service on a more sustainable setting, the budget shows that by 2015–16 the cost of public sector wages as a proportion of the budget will be higher than the figure ever was under the Bracks and Brumby governments. Even though we grew the public sector, with more teachers, more police and more nurses, we were able to maintain sustainable levels of public sector wages. This government will see the wages figure increase despite the fact that there will be record cuts through job losses across the public sector.

There is also an extraordinary decision in this budget to cut the first home bonus. At a time when the property market and the building industry are experiencing a downturn, members of this government have in their wisdom taken away an important lever that was in place especially to encourage the construction of new houses. This will have an enormous impact on families, particularly those in so many of our regional communities where that grant enabled communities to continue to grow by creating investment and jobs during the economic downturn.

Of course this is all somebody else's fault. As I asked when I was speaking on the sham motion we debated on Tuesday: what on earth has happened to the once great state of Victoria, the leading state in this country? In recent times this state withstood the global financial crisis, but now apparently we are just at the mercy of the federal government and this government cannot do anything at all. Its members are hands off, saying that it is all somebody else's fault.

Today members also heard from the Deputy Premier, who was spruiking the benefits of the budget for regional Victoria. I remind him that, as Victoria's second city, Geelong is a pretty important part of regional Victoria. The editorial in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 2 May was headed 'Tight budget a missed chance', and it stated:

... apart from the hospital there really is not much in this budget for our region.

Unfortunately, that is the case.

At a time when Geelong is experiencing some significant challenges and facing the risk of many thousands of job losses, we see no funding to protect those jobs. There is no investment in the infrastructure or initiatives that might save those jobs or assist in creating new job opportunities. For example, where is the next lot of funding for the ring-road, and what about

the funding for the reservation of the link to the Bellarine Highway? We will see a downturn in building construction with the loss of the first home bonus. We have no protection from the job losses that will be sustained in Geelong, at the Transport Accident Commission, at the Department of Health, at Parks Victoria or at the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

We see a measly \$57 million over four years for a manufacturing package. I can tell the house that this will do nothing to save the Qantas jobs at Avalon Airport. This will do nothing to assist in saving the Alcoa jobs. It will do nothing to assist these companies to become more competitive and to ensure their continued presence in Geelong. It will not even provide money for the Geelong Investment and Innovation Fund mark 2, as it is being called in Geelong. The original fund was established after Ford announced its closure and subsequent job losses occurred. It was established in partnership with the commonwealth government and with Ford. The Geelong City Council, the G21 committee and the Geelong Manufacturing Council are all calling for a fund of this nature to enable investment in diverse and innovative new industries that will help to boost Geelong's economy. That fund alone needs \$20 million, and \$57 million over four years is not even going to deliver that.

On top of this we see the government finally coming clean on the fact that it misled the community of Geelong before and after the election in relation to the mirage of the 1000 new jobs that were going to be created by moving the car industry to the port of Geelong. The government has the nerve to stamp 'Policy implemented' on that policy document, and that just shows real contempt for the people of Geelong. The people of Geelong need and deserve better.

Then there is the extraordinary decision around the cuts to TAFE. This week, along with other local members, the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer, I met with a number of industry and business leaders in Geelong for a jobs forum. One of the consistent messages we heard was about the need to invest in skills and training and about the important role the Gordon Institute of TAFE plays in helping people in the region to build new skills and in retraining people who are potentially going to lose their jobs. Committee for Geelong chief Peter Dorling was reported in today's *Geelong Advertiser* as saying that the region needed the Gordon more than ever. He went on to say:

The Gordons are part of the fabric and the social responsibility of Geelong and I think it's time for ... leadership ... to stand up for them.

This government is not standing up for Geelong, but is actually making significant cuts to a critical education and training organisation in Geelong.

The hospital funding is welcome, but I have serious concerns that in this coming financial year only \$3.8 million has been allocated to the hospital upgrade. Last year we had the farce of the \$8 million for decanting — whatever that was — and clearly nothing happened in that period. Now we have got another \$3.8 million, but we will not see one bit of concrete laid down there, no new beds and no new services for the Geelong community, and it is unclear in the budget papers when the remaining money will be delivered. When will the people of Geelong get the cancer services they need? When will they get the extra beds they need that are supposed to be delivered out of this budget? Goodness knows if the second hospital that was promised will ever come to fruition. Where is it going to be? Is it ever going to happen? Is it on the never-never? It is good that the upgrade is happening, but it is years off.

Let us look at GPAC (Geelong Performing Arts Centre). There was a big touting of \$2 million, and it is great to see some maintenance money going in. But that is what it is, basic maintenance — ventilation, toilets — that this state has a responsibility for because it is a state cultural asset. It is owned by the state, and it is one of the few performing arts centres in regional Victoria. During the last election the Labor government committed to \$30 million for a major redevelopment of GPAC, and those opposite promised \$15 million — not enough to redevelop but at least something. Where is that money? Where is that election commitment? That \$2 million is not going to deliver the redevelopment that is needed.

Of great disappointment is the absolute lack of any investment in Bellarine. It is in fact zero; there is nothing in there. I opened the *Geelong Advertiser* this morning and read a big headline: 'Health centre boost — Point Lonsdale hub gets \$3m', and I thought maybe I had misread the state budget and had missed this detail. But no; I read further that it is federal government money. Again back to zero — zero dollars in Bellarine. I can say the ministers across the table are absolutely aware of the issues that the Bellarine community faces, because I have raised them consistently over the last 18 months in this house and directly with those ministers.

Where is the funding for Portarlington Primary School? I spoke about this this morning, and it is an absolute disgrace that it has not been included in this budget. What about the Geelong High School? The member for

South Barwon said, 'Yes, I will be bipartisan about this'. Where has his advocacy been on this? What about the reservation we need to ensure the connection of the Geelong Ring Road to the Bellarine Highway? What about the Shell Road Reserve and Drysdale sporting precinct? These are critical pieces of sporting infrastructure that are required for growing communities. What about Murradoc Road in St Leonards? I raised this again last night with the Minister for Roads in this house. Where is even the small amount of funding for that? None of it is in there.

Importantly where is this government's commitment to disadvantaged communities? The funding for the Whittington community renewal program, which has made such a significant difference to literacy and numeracy rates, to employment levels and to rebuilding the community, which suffers from significant disadvantage, is about to run out. Where is the ongoing funding for a program like that? This community will face the loss of the School Start bonus and the education maintenance allowance as well as the loss of concessions. It is the most disadvantaged community in the state, but it will lose this community renewal program that has made such a difference.

Then there are the train services. Of course we are getting some more carriages, but have we got the platforms? We do not know how many. What about the people who can spend 5 hours on the train from Melbourne to Geelong? What about reliability? This is linked with the lack of plans the government has for the second crossing. What has happened to the plans that were commenced for the second crossing? Geelong is Victoria's second city, and it absolutely needs to be linked to Melbourne. It needs that, and it will continue to grow if it has these things, but this government has taken its eye off the ball. It is not enough for the Premier to say, 'I love the Cats'. I love the Cats as well — that is, I am a member of the Geelong Football Club. I have seats at Skilled Stadium, and I attend the stadium when the weekly game is played there. But that is not a plan for Geelong. Loving the Cats is not a plan for Geelong. We need real leadership. It is clear this government is not going to deliver it.

I will touch briefly on the other disappointment in this budget — that is, the government is going backwards in relation to the environment. If anyone has any doubt about this, I can tell them that this budget puts that to bed. There has been \$130 million-plus cut from the environment portfolio. There are cuts across the board, except for an increase in funding for burn-offs. Less money will be spent on water despite what the minister said previously. I can tell you, Speaker, that all these new programs have been funded from cuts; new money

is not involved. There is less money for land management, biodiversity and coastal management. There is less funding for the management of our forests and parks. There is \$30 million less for the Environment Protection Authority. There has been a \$30 million cut in the authority's funding despite the fact it needs to improve its capacity to monitor, for example, contaminated land.

There are funding cuts — \$77 million — to programs focused on assisting Victoria to adapt and respond to climate change. The minister stood up in this chamber and said, 'We are not going to have an emissions target, but we are going to have a climate adaptation plan'. But guess what? There is no money in the budget to adapt; it has all gone. Like the government's job plans, there is nothing in the climate adaptation plan; there is no funding, no vision and no action. We are still searching for the minister's claimed emissions reduction strategy in relation to beaches and that sort of thing. We are not sure what that is; we are still searching to find out exactly what that is.

This budget makes it clear that the government has abandoned its responsibilities to enhance and protect Victoria's environment. This is not a budget to crow about. It is a budget that is mean. It is a budget that fails to deliver to the regions, particularly Geelong. It is a budget that targets some of our most disadvantaged communities and families. It is a budget that fails to deliver for the future. It is a budget that sees job cuts and no future plan for the creation of new jobs. It is a budget that sends a message to Victorians that we have a mean government which has no plans for the future and that it is not here to protect and enhance our community.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — I rise to speak in support of the 2012 budget. We see that this is, importantly, a responsible budget for Victoria. It is about building a future. It is about ensuring that we achieve the best financial standing we can, not just for today but for future generations as we move ahead to ensure that we have financial security and that many people in our communities have opportunities to secure future employment. This budget supports small businesses, improves law and order and ensures that we have funding available for the most vulnerable in our community, including vulnerable children, which is one of the biggest issues.

A few items in this budget that affect the Gembrook electorate are important to me and to the Gembrook community. We have a few items that have been funded. I will run through a few that are about funding planning or getting things under way. A lot of them

deliver on commitments we made in the 2010 state election campaign. One of those items relates to Officer secondary college. I note the Minister for Education has just walked into the chamber. We were rapt to get funding for the planning of Officer secondary college. The college will not only service the Gembrook electorate but also the Bass electorate, which obviously you, Speaker, have a great deal to do with. As the growth corridor grows at the rate that is expected — over 9000 to 10 000 new houses are coming online in the next 10 to 15 years — it is important that we put infrastructure in place now so that as families move in they have educational opportunities and choices in the growth corridor.

We currently have very good schools in the area, including Pakenham Secondary College and Berwick Secondary College. Recently I went to Berwick Secondary College. The college is operating at an above capacity level at certain times. Anything that serves the growth corridor and educational needs as we get more people moving to the area, including more young families, is vital. I am proud to support the new infrastructure in the area, including the new Officer secondary college. It will be co-located with the Officer special school. We committed at the 2010 election to building the Officer special school during this term of government. That is something we stand by and are going to deliver. The remainder of that funding is in the budget. All of the plans are drawn up and ready to go to tender shortly.

Special schools provide us with choices and are important to all children and families, no matter what circumstances they are in. Some parents may choose to send their children to a school in the standard education system but others feel that their children would be better suited to a special school setting. It is important that we give them the choice of using a special school setting. Special schools traditionally hold around 80 to 100 students. They are quite compact. I have worked in one of the schools, Emerson School, in Dandenong. Quite often after special schools open they operate at or above capacity. That is because people want that choice. Emerson School and Dandenong Valley School are schools that have quickly become schools that operate at or above capacity.

Students can experience a long bus ride when travelling from within the shire of Cardinia to many of these schools. It was important to act on this and plan for a special school in Officer so that families in that area do not have to travel so far. Not only are we building a special school but we are also building a special school that will hold more than 200 students. It is a fantastic sign that we think that supporting families who have

students with special needs in that area is important, especially as many more children are being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. It is important that we give those children the opportunity to attend schools in Cardinia shire.

The co-location will mean students at the Officer special school will have some opportunities to use facilities available at the Officer secondary school. There may not be those choices in a stand-alone secondary school. It will give students attending the special school the opportunity to interact with students in the mainstream school. That is a positive for their growth; it is a positive in terms of getting them back into the community. It will give them support and confidence in relation to future employment opportunities. If a student has already worked with others in the community, that will very much help them along the way.

One of the other important commitments we made — they even put something in the *Herald Sun* about this — was to Puffing Billy. Puffing Billy is very important to my electorate, Gembrook, where tourism is so important. At the moment Puffing Billy has about 280 000 patrons per year. The CEO of Puffing Billy, whom I was speaking to yesterday, said that Puffing Billy is looking at another record year and is likely to have more than 280 000 patrons.

However, Puffing Billy has many infrastructure issues and concerns. Over many years Puffing Billy has been campaigning to get some funding. In this budget we have delivered \$4.38 million for urgent and essential infrastructure works to make sure that Puffing Billy can stay on track. I do not think there would be many members of the house who have not been on Puffing Billy, whether recently or as a child. It is one of the greatest memories for many kids — one that they take through their whole life. We never want to see Puffing Billy stop. I think that is essential. I support the fact that we have delivered funding to Puffing Billy to make sure that it stays on track and can build for the future. It has a fantastic plan in place.

Puffing Billy also understands that these days a tourist attraction cannot simply be just a train ride. It is about an experience. Through forward planning and thinking, Puffing Billy has improved its experience through education opportunities. You can also have dinner or lunch on the train, or, if you are an enthusiast, you can take a course and learn how to drive a steam or diesel train. This is a fantastic opportunity, and it is something we need to do more to promote.

One of the major commitments to the Gembrook electorate in this budget relates to my old occupation as a member of Victoria Police. We have issues in Emerald in relation to crime, something that people have been talking about for a long time. Leading up to the 2006 election the people of Emerald submitted a petition with over 3000 signatures calling on the then government to put a 24-hour police station in Emerald. During the last election when I said we would look at a 24-hour police station, I remember my opponent saying, 'That is all spin. You are not going to do anything about it. Emerald does not require one'. In this budget we have delivered \$6 million towards a 24-hour police station at Emerald.

Emerald township is a great place to live. The community has a great feel. People get together and run some fantastic events, but they also work very hard on crime prevention. The reason it is important to have a 24-hour police station in Emerald is not just because of crime. While it is important to get police on the beat for crime prevention purposes, this improved police presence will also give those police an opportunity to assist the Pakenham area, should police there require backup.

The Emerald area is also an area of high fire risk. Cockatoo, Emerald and Gembrook were devastated once before, during Ash Wednesday. Having a 24-hour police station in the heart of Emerald will mean that police will be there 24 hours a day in the event of circumstances like Ash Wednesday or — and hopefully this will never happen again — Black Saturday. Trained staff will be able to assist in evacuations and make sure the community gets the message. This is especially important in an area that struggles with phone connections and contact throughout the community. Staff will be available 24 hours a day to support people to get down from the mountains as quickly as possible, close the roads and move people around. I think that is essential for this area. This initiative only adds to the government's key platform of law and order. We have spoken about this many times, but we are also delivering 1700 new police throughout Victoria. I am sure that in the future Emerald will receive a full 24-hour police presence. The people of Emerald will appreciate that police presence when it happens.

I will now turn to the protective services officers (PSOs) initiative. PSOs are very important to the constituents of my electorate. They will be at stations in Pakenham, Cardinia Road, Berwick and Officer, as the community grows there. People want to be able to use their railway stations safely between 6.00 p.m. and midnight, which is when a lot of people travel home

from the city. It is important for people to feel safe and able to ask someone to walk them to their car and not have the safety and security concerns that currently surround the railway network. It is also very important that we acknowledge the wonderful job that PSOs do at Parliament, the courts and many other locations, including the Shrine of Remembrance. The new level of training that PSOs are getting at the academy will mean that they will be a fantastic presence and will be welcomed by the Victorian community.

During the election campaign, PSOs were referred to as 'plastic police'. I think it was very offensive of the member for Monbulk to refer to PSOs as plastic police. As reported in the media, he has now turned around and asked for PSOs to be at stations in his electorate. Now we see a bipartisan approach to PSOs. I note that there is a PSO in the gallery today. We thank the PSOs for what they do. We look forward to getting them out on the rail network, working to protect Victorians.

One of the biggest commitments in this budget is \$336 million for our most vulnerable children through the Department of Human Services. This funding will ensure that kids have the protection they need. As a member of the police force I worked in the Dandenong area, and as part of my duties I visited homes where there was domestic violence or young people in foster care. When you see those kids you really understand that we need to do more to ensure their protection for the future. Some of these young kids have had a pretty hard time. We need to make sure that we have the best front-line staff out there working with these kids one on one. We need to ensure that we guide and assist these young people to move in the direction they want to go in the future. We need to give them the opportunities that everyone should be entitled to, whether it is employment or further education. There are plenty of opportunities out there. This funding is essential. We should be very proud of the fact that the government has taken this decision.

During difficult times one thing the coalition is very big on is supporting small business, because small business is the driving force of our economy. There are over 500 000 small businesses in Victoria, with over 190 000 employing other staff. During difficult times it is very difficult for small businesses to keep operating, particularly when more red tape is being thrown at them and they have a lot of issues as they try to earn more income. The government has stood by small businesses. We are trying to cut red tape to make it easier for them so that they can get out there and do what they do best, which is delivering high levels of productivity and providing goods and services for Victorians.

The 3 per cent cut of WorkCover premiums is something I know for a fact is very much appreciated by the small businesses of Gembrook, and we have many small businesses in Gembrook. In fact it is fairly safe to say we have nearly all small businesses and not too many larger ones in the Gembrook electorate. We have some fantastic businesses, such as Robert Gordon Pottery. Sam Gordon, who is one of the directors down at Gordon pottery, very much appreciates the 3 per cent reduction. Gordon Pottery is in the Gembrook electorate. You can get a fantastic coffee there, and it also has some great programs. The people there very much appreciate the 3 per cent cut in the WorkCover premiums.

Robert Gordon Pottery is in the industry of manufacturing, and it used to produce so much of its pottery in the electorate of Gembrook, in Pakenham. It used to employ 40-plus people just to make the pottery. As times have got tougher over the last decade it has imported more than it makes locally, which is quite sad for our local area because we want to try to create more jobs, and I am working with Sam at the moment to try to find ways that we can assist the company to get more local employment in the Pakenham area — an area of high growth. With the growth down there we need more and more employment in the area.

On employment, we are lucky to have some forward thinking from our local councils. We do not always pat our local councils on the back, but the Cardinia Shire Council is doing a wonderful job with its employment precinct through Pakenham and Officer, which is aiming to employ more than 70 000 employees in the future. This is something that is required. It is all very well having the growth and many houses being built, but at the end of the day that adds to congestion on freeways, railways and so forth. However, if the Cardinia and Casey councils put together an employment precinct to try to encourage big business to come down our way and employ people locally, that would go a long way to assisting with our local economy and keeping people local and building the community.

With that contribution, I support the 2012 budget and commend it to the house.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — I wish to contribute to the debate on the budget. This budget is underpinned by excuses from a government which, within just 18 months, has thrown out every promise on which it was elected and has also squandered the trust of Victorians who invested in it in November 2010. It has done this with a brazen and arrogant disregard for what it is like for the members of ordinary families,

who can now see their futures through the lens of uncertainty thanks to the Baillieu government. This budget speaks of that in volumes. It is an illustration and an iteration of the disregard and brazen arrogance of the government. This government has said repeatedly, with hand on heart, that it will help to cut the cost of living for ordinary Victorians. Only 18 months ago the now Premier, meeting with older Victorians at the Keilor Bowls Club, said:

Victorians, especially those on fixed incomes, are struggling with day-to-day living costs that are increasing at an alarming rate.

The now Deputy Premier himself at the same visit said:

Concession card holders have worked, raised families and paid taxes their whole life, so it is only fair for the coalition to give something back by reducing the cost of living.

What we know now is that that was said probably in jest, because what we have now is the opposite. We have a government that lauds its own budget — last year's and this year's — but has delivered an indexation of concessions capped at 2 per cent when the CPI is forecasting, in the budget papers themselves, that inflation will rise by 2.75 per cent in the same period.

Is this fair? Is this going forward and making it easier for families? I would contend that on the evidence the answer is blatantly no. Is this what the government means by giving something back to Victorians who are doing it tough? That is a very strange understanding of what is fair and giving back to the community that elected the government. Instead it is a cash grab. The most needy Victorians are now paying for this government's scramble to get a budget surplus. And why has it had to scramble? Because it has done nothing in 18 months other than drive up uncertainty across business, across industry and across Victorian families, which has reduced confidence in Victoria.

The budget has very little to say on infrastructure spending, which has been a key driver in —

Mr Mulder interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The Minister for Public Transport should not talk about the South Morang project. That was not funded. It was well and truly ahead of time when the Labor Party government was still in government. However, this government is taking away from ordinary Victorians rather than helping them. It has been a very long time since we last saw a government exercise such a brazen grab for cash from people in this state who are amongst the most vulnerable. It is a snatch and grab perhaps — a mugging maybe, maybe not — but here is a

government that is picking the pockets of every single pensioner in Victoria. The Premier's hand will now dig deep into every pensioner's pocket to retrieve, to claw back, through a cash grab, the concessions which they have worked hard to keep.

If we have a look at the energy concession spend in the budget papers, we see that this has been reduced by about \$11.1 million. That is for concessions for electricity tariffs and gas tariffs. An amount of \$11.1 million may be very small change for the Premier and the people he hangs around with, but for battling ordinary Victorians who deserve help this is not help, this is punishment. It is an outrage and it ought to be condemned, and this opposition condemns it.

We heard the now Deputy Premier saying before the election that concession card holders have worked, raised families and paid their taxes their whole lives, so it is only fair for the coalition to give something back to them by reducing the cost of living. Does he really think that that means clawing back the energy concession? Does he think that that is fair? Fair for whom? That is the question that has no answer to it. Certainly it is a broken promise, but it is more than that. It is not helping families cut their costs; it is adding to their cost of living.

The first home bonus is now gone, at a time when the single most important way for a family to better manage its cost of living pressures is for its members to have a job. That might come as a surprise to those in government, but the single most important way family members can be helped to manage their cost of living pressures is for them to have a job. What we have is a major disconnect in this government's understanding of what the pressures are with the cost of living and how to go about helping families meet those costs.

It is because this government is far removed from the experiences of ordinary Victorians and businesses out there, which juggle the bills and try to work out when to spend on a bill and when not to spend on a bill because they have to meet some medical expense or they have to buy the groceries or pay for the shoes for school. It is that juggling act that this government has never experienced and has absolutely no regard for, and that is a crying shame.

What is also important to consider when we talk about the cost of living is the first home bonus, as I mentioned earlier. At a time when the government is overseeing the shrinking of jobs in the construction and housing industry, the removal of the first home bonus program will drive down investment in housing, which will mean that many apprentices and people who work on

the tools in construction will now be facing an uncertain future in terms of their own job prospects. We have already heard anecdotes from ordinary Victorians saying that they cannot move on to another job in construction because there are none and that apprentices are being laid off. The future of Victoria and our economy, our apprentices and our young people wanting to start off in life being skilled up are now being pushed aside by the government's inaction.

When the bad news comes down, the Premier stands by and waves to the passing crowd — a growing crowd of jobless Victorians — and simply says, 'It's disappointing'. That was his response when the news broke about Qantas maintenance jobs possibly being lost from Victoria. I say to the Premier: people do not want to hear his observations about their circumstances and the dire uncertainty of jobs in the future. They want to see action; they want to see a jobs plan. The Premier thinks they are waving back to him because they want to commend him on his inspiring leadership, but that is not the case. The fact is they are frustrated and increasingly angry because he is doing nothing.

The unemployment rate in Victoria has risen to 5.4 per cent. It is now above the national average, when it was travelling quite successfully under the previous government when sufficient government investment helped drive confidence and leverage investment from the private sector to keep jobs here in Victoria. What does this mean for communities such as mine in the northern suburbs? For generations the northern suburbs have depended upon the manufacturing industry. What we have now is the shrinking of the number of manufacturing jobs for families and businesses in my electorate in the northern suburbs, yet the Premier stands by and says, 'It is disappointing', while waving to the passing parade of the increasing number of jobless people. Victoria has now clocked up almost 8500 jobs gone in just a matter of months.

The dream of many Victorian families — and one that the coalition attempted to harness, if you like, in its election commitments — is to own their own homes. The removal of the first home bonus is basically tipping a bucket of cold water on many families and young people who want to enter the housing market and own their own homes. This will have an impact on construction jobs, and the private rental market will surge ahead at a rapid rate. Families are being left behind by this government, and they are being jammed. That is their situation.

We have already heard commentary about the education maintenance allowance, which a previous Labor government introduced not only to directly help

families to meet the cost of sending their children to school but also to help the schools themselves, especially in disadvantaged communities, in engaging students in the school environment so they do not feel left out and are better placed to learn and thrive in the educational environment, which they deserve to do.

I believe the government thought this was a clever way of axing half of the education maintenance allowance — that component that goes to schools — thinking that if it preserved the amount that goes to families, families simply would not notice or be affected. The reality is very different. I have done a phone ring around the schools in my electorate. They told me that the way they have been able to use their component of the education maintenance allowance was to provide — guess what? — breakfast clubs for kids who were sent to school with no food in their stomachs. How are they supposed to — —

Mr Mulder interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The Minister for Public Transport interjected about sunglasses. That is an absolute joke, because he obviously has no idea what it is like to go to school with no food in your stomach — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister not to interject, and I ask the member not to respond to interjections.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — My point is this: the component of the education maintenance allowance that goes to schools has been absolutely instrumental in helping to improve the school retention rate and the ability of schoolchildren to succeed. They do not go just to have their names ticked off the roll; they go to learn and to have every opportunity, as they deserve, to do well in life. Schools in my electorate have told me quite clearly, 'Lily, it will now be a struggle for us to even provide food for the kids who come to school hungry. It means it will be far harder for us to pay for kids to go on excursions and be included in school life with their friends, because we will not be able to stretch our budget that far'. These are the consequences of this government's actions. Members of the government are remote and removed from the everyday experiences of so many families in my electorate and surrounds. This will be the legacy of this government.

The School Start bonus was a key way to help Victorian families meet the cost of living. This might come as news to the government, but the reality is that there are many peaks in the types of costs and bills that confront ordinary families. Earlier I talked about the

juggling act that so many families have to perform week to week to work out how to pay their bills. The time when children start school — whether it is primary school in prep or secondary school in year 7 — is one of those challenging points where parents suffer price shock, believe it or not, in not being able to scramble money together to ensure that their kids have adequate uniforms, school shoes or books so that they can have a good start at school. That bonus has now gone.

Last year the government said it would maintain the School Start bonus but would means test it. This year it will be totally gone — \$300 at a time. This is what the government means by being fair and giving back to ordinary Victorians so that they can meet the cost of living. This government has done nothing but add to the cost of living for ordinary Victorians, their families and businesses in the community.

Another point is that, in a nice sleight of hand on the part of the government, it has discounted the value of the energy concession rebate by the amount pensioners will be given as compensation for the introduction of the carbon price. When pensioners reach into their pockets looking for their compensation, they will find someone else's hand in the pocket already. The Premier of Victoria will already have dipped his hand into every pensioner's pocket to rip away and do a cash grab, which is this government's hallmark. This budget is a budget that fails ordinary Victorians and fails to address the cost of living pressures.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Mr MULDER (Minister for Public Transport) — I am absolutely delighted to speak on the Appropriation Bill (2012/2013) Bill 2012. The budget reflects the coalition's economic strategy, which is to generate jobs for Victorians, boost productivity in Victoria and grow Victoria's economy. It is quite clear when you look at the commentary around our budget that the business community knows that we are taking Victoria in the right direction.

This budget provides for growing populations in Melbourne and in the regions and country Victoria, and it delivers on pre-election commitments. The commitments we make are the commitments that we keep. Prior to the November 2010 election we made no bones about what would be the defining features of a coalition government in the area of transport. We said we would go back to basics to meet Victorians' expectations of a reliable and punctual public transport system. We acknowledged that Victoria needed a plan for long-term transport needs to ensure that we could

support our growing population. We said that we would deliver projects that would also support regional Victoria, and we are doing that. We also said that we would improve safety on our roads and also on public transport, in contrast to how the railway stations had become hotbeds of crime and havens for thugs under the former government. We said we were going to fix that, and we are going to fix that. We are going to deliver on those commitments and promises we made to the Victorian public.

I am extremely pleased to acknowledge that the budget includes more than half a billion dollars for public transport initiatives in Victoria. It contains approximately \$700 million for road network improvements, which is going to generate more than 4500 jobs in the construction industry. This is a huge win for Victorians, and those on the other side know that that is the case. The road network improvements are on top of funding for country roads and bridges that were announced in the 2011–12 budget — a commitment of \$160 million to smaller rural councils. This budget is shaped to meet the very real and serious challenges that we face at present, and it is also focused on securing the future for all Victorians.

There is praise for the budget from a number of business organisations throughout the community. Mark Stone of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry said:

... the budget retains a key focus on infrastructure with much needed funding for progression of the business case for the east west link and planning and development of the Melbourne Metro rail project.

The Committee for Melbourne welcomed our budget with open arms, referring to the:

... focus on some of Melbourne's critical infrastructure and productivity-enhancing projects in the Victorian state budget.

That is what the business community is saying, and that is what third parties are saying. They are endorsing this budget. They know that we had a tough challenge in front of us. They know that we inherited a mess from the former government, but we are getting on with the job, and we are delivering projects.

This budget allocates \$15 million for the planning and development of the east–west link. The east–west link should have been started years ago by the previous Labor government. It was too frightened and too beholden to the Greens, and it would not deliver that important piece of infrastructure, but we are not going to wait. This budget provides a further \$7.5 million to kick-start this project on top of a previous \$7.5 million

that we had allocated. We have \$49.7 million for the statutory planning of the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel.

Mr Noonan interjected.

Mr MULDER — I say to the member for Williamstown: yes, we do the planning. If Labor had done the planning on a lot of its projects, we would not be in the mess we are in today. We are the first state government to put money into the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel. The former state government did not put a cent in. It relied on the commonwealth government. We are committed to the project, and we are stumping up the money. We are putting the money into this project. We rank the east–west link and the Metro tunnel as the critical projects to drive this economy and to improve productivity in Melbourne. We believe they are critical projects, and so do commentators who have supported our budget initiatives. We will require assistance from the commonwealth government to deliver these projects, which is why we included them in our submission to Infrastructure Australia. I ask those on the other side to get behind the government, support the east–west link and support the Metro tunnel.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia said on Tuesday:

It is in everybody's interest that next week's federal budget makes substantial investments, alongside the states, to underpin Australia's competitiveness.

Get onto Julia Gillard, get onto Anthony Albanese, get onto your federal members, and make sure that they get behind the east–west tunnel and tell them that you are behind it at the same time. These projects will build a stronger Victoria, supporting jobs and economic growth in the process. It is about jobs, and that is why we need broadbased support and also support from the other side of this chamber.

The budget also includes \$17.7 million for railway station works in support of the coalition's promise to recruit 940 Victoria Police protective services officers (PSOs). I have had the pleasure of going to Southern Cross station and have met with a number of the PSOs there. They are fine members of the protective services division of Victoria Police. They do a great job: they look after us here in Parliament, they protect the courts and they protect the Shrine of Remembrance. I find it absolutely incredible and hypocritical that those on the other side would accept the protection of those people on a day-to-day basis in this Parliament but then refer to them, as some members on the other side have, as plastic police. What an absolute pack of hypocrites they are! We support them, the public love them and the people at Southern Cross station, including the shopkeepers, embrace them. We are going to roll that

policy out, and we are going to get rid of the thugs that were allowed to roam the stations and were left there by the Labor government to put fear into the minds of people. We are going to clean that mess up.

We are delivering on a pre-election commitment for a metropolitan level-crossing blitz, providing thousands of jobs in the process. We include \$350 million to remove level crossings at Mitcham Road, Mitcham, at Brooks Road, Mitcham, and at Springvale Road, Springvale. Not only that but we are also reinstating two vital level-crossing projects in Anderson Road, Sunshine, that were put in by the former Labor government, taken out by the former Labor government, put back in — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The members for Kororoit and Footscray are out of their places and disorderly.

Mr MULDER — Opposition members turned their backs on the Labor Party heartland. They were going to dud them all the way with this project and leave those crossings in place, which would have put people's lives at risk on a day-to-day basis. It has taken a Baillieu government to reinstate these projects right in the heart of the western suburbs, right in Labor heartland. We are going to deliver on those projects as well.

The Dingley bypass project has been on the drawing board for a long time. It will link manufacturing areas in Moorabbin and Dandenong and support hundreds of jobs in the process. We are going to deliver on the Dingley bypass, and we have almost tripled the original commitment of \$55 million to make sure we get a great project up for the people in that area.

The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria has welcomed the budget's commitment to roads in Melbourne's growth suburbs. There is \$49 million in the budget for the Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road between Pound Road in Narre Warren South and Thompson Road in Cranbourne North — a great project for that part of Melbourne. It is astonishing that for 11 years, with suburbs booming out in that area, the former Labor government turned its back on this project. It is a Baillieu government that is going to deliver that project. In the toughest of economic times we are going to do it. In addition, the budget contains funding to deliver on important election promises by the coalition — namely, the upgrade of Stud Road between Boronia Road and Mountain Highway in Bayswater, another project we inherited from the former Labor government that it

would not put money into. It simply would not deliver it.

There is the Ballarat western link road, which will support economic development in western Ballarat. This project is part of Ballarat City Council's strategic plan to ensure that it can grow jobs in this location in Ballarat. This road will link with viable highways. These are economy-building jobs for the people of Ballarat, and they have welcomed this project with open arms. There is \$42 million to duplicate the Western Highway from Beaufort to Buangor. There is also \$5.5 million over four years to continue the express bus to Monash University in Clayton. What a great initiative that was by the coalition government, which turned up and delivered it on the spot. It has been embraced by the university students and the people who work at Monash University.

The budget contains \$14 million for maintenance on the West Gate Bridge. Funding of \$40 million will also be available to Australia's small rural councils as part of the government's \$160 million commitment to those battling small councils that struggle with roads, putting new decks on bridges, building new infrastructure, resheeting roads and fixing up Labor's potholes. That program has been embraced by the Municipal Association of Victoria and greatly supported by all of the small councils.

There is \$17 million for Victoria's next road safety action plan. This follows on from the government's 2011–12 action plan released last year. Bearing in mind the latest statistics I am sure members on the other side will support me when I say that the loss of one life on the roads is too many. Currently the road toll is about 3 below last year's toll, and I am sure members on both sides would hope that trend continues going forward and that we can collectively produce another record low road toll in Victoria.

Transport projects in the budget also include amenities for cyclists. The scope of the Springvale Road grade separation includes a shared youth path and a bicycle shelter. The Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road upgrade will include a shared-use path.

I am absolutely delighted that the budget will also set aside funding for new V/Line railcars and regional rail maintenance. When the regional rail link operation begins in the next few years with its separate double line between Southern Cross station and Sunshine, the V/Line country trains and new railcars will allow V/Line to provide extra trips and more seats on V/Line services. This was not included in the regional rail link project, which was poorly scoped and had no money

made available for it. Extra railcars will provide the opportunity for more locomotive pull cars to be put in reserve to ensure that we have backup. Subject to agreement with the supplier, we expect that these railcars will start to roll out in 2014 to support this very important project for Victoria.

The government has also delivered on other major commitments in terms of regional Victoria. There is \$8.4 million towards the Grovedale railway station — another commitment by the coalition government to support those people in the Armstrong Creek area and support the growing area of Geelong. People in Geelong know that we are onside with them. They have a lot of doubts about the other side; there has been no support for Avalon Airport from the other side and nothing to support the people of Geelong. We are getting on with doing the real projects that will make a big difference to the people of Geelong.

There is \$171 million to get back to basics and make sure that where the rural and regional rail link expands beyond that project out into the country areas we maintain that network and make sure it is safe and sound. There will be a massive investment in rolling stock and maintenance to make sure that we can deliver the types of services that people in rural and regional Victoria need.

In relation to V/Line and the work it will be undertaking, there will be works undertaken along the Seymour line, substantial bridge replacement, concrete resleeper and rejuvenation of platforms at Broadford and Wallan. There will be a range of different projects, which include remedial action on historic bridges between Watergardens and Bendigo, dustproofing of equipment cabinets and replacement of point machines in V/Line's passenger stabling yard adjacent to Southern Cross station. The work goes on.

There will be reconstruction of platform coping at Stratford on the Bairnsdale line and investigations into coping of platforms at Heathcote Junction on the Seymour line, as well as bridge works between Bendigo and Echuca. As I said, the work goes on to make sure we can deliver a safe, sound and reliable public transport network.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Higher Education and Skills: correspondence

Mr ANDREWS (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier deny that he or anyone in his office pressured the Minister for Higher Education and Skills to write a second letter retracting his scathing criticism of this government's savage cutbacks to TAFEs?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — Up front I do not accept the premise of the Leader of the Opposition's question at all. The Minister for Higher Education and Skills has indicated that he is very supportive of the government's program and that he is committed to it. He is a passionate individual — —

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question.

Mr BAILLIEU — He is a passionate individual, and he has clarified that he has deeply committed to it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will come to order. Question time has been going for 1 minute now, and already it is starting to get out of control.

Mr BAILLIEU — As I said yesterday, what has occurred in vocational education and training since our predecessors introduced the new model is that the provision of training in this state has led to an increase in enrolment numbers from around 350 000 in 2010 to close to 550 000, and with that has come the subsidy. That is why the vocational education and training system in Victoria has to be changed and has to be put on a sustainable platform. That is what we are doing, that is what the minister has committed to, that is what the minister is passionate about and that is what the government is passionate about. We are going to work with providers, whether they be TAFE providers or whether they be adult community education providers, to put training in this state on a sustainable basis.

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am sure the Leader of the Opposition does not want to go out of the house again today.

Mr BAILLIEU — If only the Leader of the Opposition's passion was as significant as the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr BAILLIEU — We will put training onto a sustainable platform. This system will be rolled out nationally. It needs to be demonstrated to be on a sustainable basis, and we will be putting record funding into it. I say again that it is critical that we transform this training system into a sustainable system. We will work with all the providers to make sure that happens. When we look at what our predecessors budgeted for this year — about \$850 million for a training package, which is now going to take up \$1.2 billion plus — we can see it needs to be changed. The minister is committed.

The minister has made it very clear that he supports the government's package and supports the proposals. Indeed he has said as much: that this is an opportunity to put the TAFE sector into a key position of leadership, and that is what we and the minister are committed to doing.

Budget: infrastructure projects

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline to the house how the 2012–13 state budget strengthens Victoria's economy into the future?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — The general government capital program in the budget is \$5.8 billion. That is \$5.8 billion worth of jobs that have been dismissed by the opposition — \$5.8 billion! After excluding the fiscal stimulus from the commonwealth, this is the largest investment in the history of Victoria. Overall there will be \$41 billion of government-sponsored public sector projects under way in 2012–13. We have delivered a responsible and prudent budget, and it has been received as such. We are intent on returning the budget in Victoria to a sustainable basis, unlike our predecessors.

We are investing in vital transport infrastructure and, as I said, we were very pleased to announce the \$1 billion-plus redevelopment of Webb Dock. It is a critical piece of infrastructure for Victoria that has been opposed by only one group. We know who opposed that move. We are generating additional road capacity across the state by building bypasses, duplicating roads, eliminating some of the pinch points and undertaking grade separations.

There is the Dingley bypass between Warrigal Road and Westall Road. That is a key commitment. It will

link key employment zones and has been sought for many years, and we will deliver it. There is the Koo Wee bypass and Ballarat Western Link Road, which are very significant projects, as the Speaker knows. There is the Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road duplication, the Stud Road improvement and the Western Highway duplication. We are investing in those key grade separations at Mitcham and Rooks roads and at Springvale Road, Springvale. They will be well received, and they will deliver jobs in the construction industry, in the civil construction industry in particular.

We are buying additional regional rolling stock and upgrading the Warragul railway station car park. We are building a new corrections facility, which is long overdue and is an investment that was neglected by our predecessors. We are investing in health projects in Geelong and Frankston. We are building additional facilities at Frankston Hospital's emergency department, and we have invested more than \$40 million in a helipad and extra beds at Ballarat hospital. After 11 years of neglecting that issue and even voting against a helipad for Ballarat, you would think that some people — the opposition in particular — would now be supportive of that project.

There are school capital projects such as the one at Ashwood Secondary College, the new Doreen South Primary School, the modernisation of Bairnsdale Secondary College and many others. These infrastructure investments will boost jobs. They will generate activity. They will generate productivity changes, and they are opposed by only a few. We all know who they are. They are down here. Members on the back bench should come down and replace them.

Mark Stone, the CEO of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said of the budget:

Most importantly, the budget retains a key focus on infrastructure, with much-needed funding for progression of the business case for the east-west link and planning and redevelopment of the Melbourne Metro rail project.

Some people had a chance to stand up today and put their credentials on the table. What did they do? They got up and said absolutely nothing, despite the promises of the Leader of the Opposition.

Higher education: TAFE funding

Mr ANDREWS (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Given that the Minister for Higher Education and Skills earlier today refused to rule out TAFE campus closures, will the Premier rule

out the closure of any TAFE campus as a consequence of his government's savage cutbacks to TAFE?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — I say again that the vocational education and training (VET) system has to change in this state. Some do not want to recognise it, but the VET system has to change to put it on a sustainable footing. Over the last two or three years we have seen TAFE's share of VET training fall significantly. We will be working with TAFE, we will be working with the adult community education providers and the private providers to put in place a system which is focused on quality and focused on industry needs, and which is, most importantly, sustainable. That is what our predecessors ignored. That is what the opposition now seeks to ignore. It cannot be retained in the way that it is currently. We have to do something about it.

As the minister has indicated and as the government has indicated, we will be working with the providers on a new system that is focused on additional support for courses where there is a significant industry need and focused on significant support for apprenticeships, working with TAFE in particular to reposition TAFE to do what it does best. TAFE has significant competitive advantages, and we would look to work with TAFE to make sure that it can make maximum use of the funding available — and the funding available is at levels hundreds of millions of dollars more than our predecessors committed to. That is what we are committed to, that is what the minister is committed to, and I invite the opposition to get on board.

Budget: commentary

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise the house how the community has responded to the 2012–13 state budget?

Mr WELLS (Treasurer) — This has been a tough budget but we believe a responsible budget, despite world uncertainty, a weakening national economy, the uncertainty around the carbon tax and this government having to sort out the previous government's mess. We had structural deficits, expenditure outstripping revenue, the messes regarding myki and the Melbourne Markets. Then we had the desalination plant, thanks to the incompetent bungling of the former Minister for Water, which means we now have charges of \$2 million a day before 1 litre of water heads down that pipeline — and we can thank the previous Minister for Water for that.

Despite all that, we delivered a surplus, but this budget that we delivered on Tuesday is about the future and it is about opportunities. It is about generating jobs over the forward estimates. It is about cutting costs for businesses. It is about cutting WorkCover by 3 per cent. That will save business about \$60 million a year. It is about cutting red tape by 25 per cent, which will save \$715 million a year. It is about saying no to the Gillard government's occupational health and safety policy, which was going to cost business \$3.4 billion over a five-year period, hitting mostly small businesses.

It is about building infrastructure. It is about building hospitals, it is about building schools, it is about eliminating level crossings, it is about roads and it is about generating construction jobs. When you build hospitals, it is about more nurses and more doctors. When you build more police stations, it is about more police. It is about ordering that rolling stock — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WELLS — It is about buying more rolling stock and pushing for it to be manufactured here in Victoria.

What are the organisations and industry saying about our budget? Let us look at the Real Estate Institute of Victoria. It said:

The REIV has welcomed the priority placed on ensuring economic growth in the Victorian budget and the provision of ongoing funding for stamp duty cuts for first home buyers.

The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria said:

The east–west link is a major project that will alleviate the massive congestion — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WELLS — Infrastructure Partnerships Australia said:

The Victorian budget's focus on cutting operating costs is fundamental to achieving an enlarged infrastructure program in coming years ...

The Committee for Ballarat said:

The Committee for Ballarat strongly endorses the funding allocation of \$35.5 million in yesterday's state government budget for delivery of stage 1 of the western link road.

We are extremely pleased with this outcome.

The Victorian Association of Forest Industries said that it was:

... a responsible plan that continued the government's investment in the infrastructure of rural and regional Victoria ...

This budget is a responsible budget. It is about creating and generating jobs over the forward estimates, and it is one we are very proud of.

Youth: employment

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — My question is to the Minister for Youth Affairs. Can the minister guarantee that the savage TAFE cutbacks will have no impact on or lead to further increases in Victoria's youth unemployment rate, which currently stands at 22.3 per cent, the highest in Australia?

Mr R. SMITH (Minister for Youth Affairs) — What I can say is that the best way to support jobs for youth is through a strong economy. After 11 years of Labor's waste and mismanagement this government has built a strong economic strategy around a responsible budget around addressing productivity — —

Mr Merlino — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly reading from a document. The face was going red but the eyes were down. He was clearly reading it. I ask that you ask the member to table the document.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister was reading from notes. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr R. SMITH — The important issues that have been addressed by this budget mean that this government has a responsible budget and one that will support youth in unemployment going forward. Last year I was very pleased to announce \$12.3 million — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Essendon

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Essendon can leave the chamber for half an hour. He should know better.

Honourable member for Essendon withdrew from the chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Youth: employment

Questions resumed.

Mr R. SMITH (Minister for Youth Affairs) — Last year I was very pleased to announce \$12.3 million in Engage! grants. Those Engage! grants went to 102 organisations across this state, and those grants encourage students to stay at school and also help them with mentoring and skilling and will generate hundreds of jobs in the future.

When I announced this particular program I visited the street coffee cart down at Melbourne Central station, where I met a young lady, Chantelle Ellen, who was homeless and who had got involved with the program. She was making some really good progress in looking for work as a pastry chef. She was also employed by the street operation to run one of the coffee carts. This is just one small example of how this government through the Engage! grants, through the youth affairs portfolio, is helping young kids — young Victorians, the youth of Victoria — to get skills and to get into employment. That is the way that this government is supporting young people in employment. That is what this government is about: making sure we have tangible outcomes — and we cannot support youth unless we have a strong budget.

Budget: police and emergency services

Mr McCURDY (Murray Valley) — My question is to the Deputy Premier, who is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Can the minister outline to the house how the coalition government's 2012–13 budget is investing to bolster front-line services to protect Victorian communities?

Mr RYAN (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the member for his very timely and appropriate question. The government's budget continues our work in bolstering front-line services by investing in new infrastructure and new equipment and resources with the basic intent of providing better protections for our local communities. That is happening in a number of ways.

We have invested \$133 million in new infrastructure across Victoria to support the work of front-line police officers and protective services officers (PSOs). I might say it is wonderful to see the bipartisan support for

protective services officers across the chamber now. I have read a number of articles in which members of the opposition have joined members on this side of the house in welcoming the prospect of the PSOs being in their respective areas, and it is a great thing. I welcome that support.

This all builds of course on the budget of last year, which invested \$602 million for the recruitment, training and deployment of another 1700 front-line officers and \$212 million in relation to the 940 protective services officers, with all of that to be done by November 2014. I am pleased to tell the house that about 850 of those officers will have been trained and deployed by June this year — June 2012. I am pleased to say also that they have been spread right across the state of Victoria in deployment by police command — not only in the metropolitan areas but in the regional areas as well.

The \$133 million includes various other aspects: \$56 million to upgrade and build new police facilities to accommodate the rollout of those 1700 police and the 940 PSOs; \$21.7 million to upgrade the facilities at the train stations to accommodate the PSOs; and \$54.6 million to progress specific capital projects. Among those is \$27 million for the Victoria Police operational tactics and safety training complex at Essendon, which will be a new facility and a fabulous addition to the various facilities for the training of Victoria Police. It also includes \$13.6 million for a new police station and VICSES (Victoria State Emergency Service) combined facility at Waurin Ponds, which I know has been very warmly welcomed by the local member, and \$6.27 million for a new police station at Emerald.

The budget also provides funding for protecting children, including \$8.8 million over four years to strengthen the oversight, monitoring and management of registered sex offenders who may be living in the community and funding for additional multidisciplinary centres across the state, which I am sure will be welcomed by all members of the house. In addition \$57 million is being provided for front-line emergency services; \$23 million for the replacement or upgrade of fire stations, going towards our ultimate commitment of 250 stations; and \$12.3 million for the CFA (Country Fire Authority) for additional equipment.

The budget provides \$2.1 million for the development of the emergency services communications master plan; \$3.9 million to improve the resilience of the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority's computer assist dispatch system; and \$15.7 million to integrate VICSES into the incident control centres

which have been opened across the state and which continue to be rolled out on the basis of assisting the interoperability between agencies. In addition this latest investment will enable VICSES to access the soon to be developed Department of Sustainability and Environment Floodzooom program, enhancing the capability of VICSES in the flood areas. These are huge investments for the good of all Victorians, and we are proud to be able to make them.

Public sector: job losses

Mr ANDREWS (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. Can the Premier confirm that the government has appealed a ruling by Fair Work Australia to release the final copy of the Vertigan report, a report which details further public sector job cuts and privatisations?

Mr BAILLIEU (Premier) — The audit commission made an interim report, now colloquially known as the Vertigan report, which was made available. The government has made no decision about the Vertigan report, but the report has been available to government in terms of budget deliberations, and it will be considered as such.

Mr Andrews — On a point of order, Speaker, I am grateful to the Premier for his answer. The question, however, related to whether the government had appealed against the ruling of Fair Work Australia to release that report — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier answered the question.

Budget: public transport and roads

Ms MILLER (Bentleigh) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Can the minister inform the house how the 2012–13 state budget contributes to road safety and improved public transport for Victorians?

Mr MULDER (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank the member for Bentleigh for her question and for her very strong interest in public transport, road safety and improving productivity in Victoria. The state budget makes some very significant investments in relation to public transport and roads, and in particular road safety issues. There is \$350 million for the abolition of dangerous level crossings. The Springvale Road, Springvale, crossing will go, Mitcham Road, Mitcham, will go and Rooks Road in Mitcham will also go. These two major dangerous level crossings, Springvale Road and Mitcham Road, were of course identified in the 2008 Australian level crossing

assessment model list as being the state's most dangerous level crossings. We have included Rooks Road in the Mitcham Road project, because it makes sense when we have contractors mobilised to get rid of that dangerous level crossing at the same time.

To give an understanding to the house of the impact these level crossings have on productivity and road safety — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member the Yan Yean!

Mr MULDER — During the morning peak 39 trains go through the Springvale Road level crossing and 1000 pedestrians cross it. The boom gates are closed for about 50 minutes, so you can imagine the impact that has on heavy vehicles, on tradesmen and on mums and dads going to work and using that crossing on a day-to-day basis. We are not talking about minutes lost; we are talking about hours lost on a weekly basis.

On Anderson Road in Sunshine another two level crossings will be abolished as part of the regional rail link project. Those two crossings were put into the regional rail link project by the former government and taken out by the former government. They were ripped out of the western suburbs, and it took a Baillieu government to reinstate those two projects in the regional rail link project.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ferntree Gully!

Mr MULDER — It is interesting to hear the commentary that has come out of the west in relation to Baillieu government support for these projects. The Brimbank Transport Action Group's Peter Thomson was reported as commenting on the project. The article states:

... the release of the designs was a welcome step in the fight to remove the dangerous crossings.

'It's going to make a big difference to the traffic flow there and to safety. There have been a lot of accidents because of those crossings'.

LeadWest, which includes the Brimbank, Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley councils, said:

The project also addresses major congestion and safety problems at the two Anderson Street level crossings near Sunshine station. Removal of the level crossings will improve safety and would also reduce traffic congestion.

This is a great endorsement from the western suburbs, from the Labor heartland, for Baillieu government commitments to the western suburbs and making sure those people are safer — and we are improving the amenity in those areas. It is not only that: there is also \$16.5 million for planning to abolish crossings going forward at Mountain Highway and Scoresby Road, Bayswater, at North Road, Ormond, at Blackburn Road, Blackburn, and at Burke Road, Glen Iris. There is also money for rail maintenance, Warragul station, the route 601 bus to Monash University and a range of other projects.

It is interesting to see the approach of the former Labor government's members in relation to some of those crossings. I refer to *Hansard*, where the former member for Mitcham and former Minister for Gaming, Tony Robinson, asked this question on notice:

To ask the Honourable the Minister for Transport, on how many occasions —

the boom barriers had failed —

at ... Rooks Road, Mitcham ...

and at

... Mitcham Road, Mitcham ...

Fourteen years ago the former Labor member for Mitcham raised this issue in the house. He knew how to blow money — \$3 billion on a botched poker machine licence auction that went belly up and that could have been used to get rid of about 20 other level crossings across the metropolitan area.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr MULDER — It was absolutely botched.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister — —

Mr MULDER — Those opposite should never be able to touch money. They should never put their hands on it, because — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will resume his seat.

Public sector: regional and rural job losses

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security.

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Speaker, I believe I heard the member for Monbulk, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, make a remark that cast aspersions on the Chair. I thought I heard him say,

‘Two rules in this house’. I ask him to withdraw that aspersion on the Chair. It is an absolutely irresponsible reflection on the Chair.

The SPEAKER — Order! I did not hear the comment.

Mr MERLINO — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. I refer the minister to the Baillieu government’s plan to sack 4200 public sector workers, and I ask: can the minister guarantee that not one job will be lost from DPI (Department of Primary Industries) offices across the state, including those in Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Benalla, Bendigo, Colac, Ellinbank, Echuca, Geelong, Hamilton, Horsham, Kerang, Leongatha, Maffra, Mildura, Queenscliff, Rutherglen, Snobs Creek, Tatura, Warrnambool and Wodonga, or will The Nationals continue to remain silent on Liberal cuts in the bush?

Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for his question about agriculture. We have been in government for nearly 18 months now, and this is the first question about agriculture.

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Footscray

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Footscray can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Honourable member for Footscray withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Public sector: regional and rural job losses

Questions resumed.

Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security) — As I said, I thank the member for his question and for the fact that the opposition has finally realised that there is an agricultural industry in Victoria. It is the biggest export industry there is out of this state, and there has not been one question about that over the last 18 months. In the budget there is a great story to tell about food and fibre production in this state.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Lyndhurst!

Mr WALSH — The agriculture and food industries plan is a good story for country Victoria. It actually has more money in it than the previous government’s Future Farming strategy had. If you compare like with like, you see there is more money in this budget for food and fibre production in this state than the previous government had in its so-called Future Farming strategy. Like for like, there is more money there.

There is money for the dairy industry for research, extension and development. It is the single largest export industry out of regional Victoria. There is money in the budget for the grains industry for research and development — another great industry that creates jobs in communities around this state. There is money in the budget for the red meat industry. If members look at the red meat industry, they will see that there is money there that will create jobs for research and development in our regional institutes around Victoria, particularly at Hamilton, where there has already been a significant investment in lamb research.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr WALSH — This will mean more money for research at that institute.

Mr Merlino — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has had more than 2 minutes to get to the question. The question was about whether he would guarantee that DPI officers will not be losing their jobs — —

The SPEAKER — Order! A point of order is not an opportunity to ask the question again. The member understands that.

Mr Merlino — If I can continue my point of order, Speaker, the point of order relates to the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! Not if you are going to repeat the question.

Mr Merlino — The minister is not being relevant to the question. He is clearly not prepared to give that guarantee of protecting jobs in regional Victoria.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I believe the minister was being very relevant to the question.

Mr WALSH — There is significant money in the budget, as I have been outlining, for DPI — for research, for development and for extension — so that we can grow our exports out of this state. One of the key aspects of the commitment from this government to grow export markets is about growing wealth for our state, particularly wealth for regional Victorian communities to create jobs in those communities. If members look at what is in the budget, they will see that there is money for that research. There is money for the horticultural industry to grow exports from the stone fruit industry, to grow exports from the pear industry and to grow exports from the almond industry, which will create jobs in country Victoria.

There is money in the budget for biosecurity. There is money there to make sure we protect the integrity of our products going into export markets. There is money in the budget for an export expansion program. One of the key issues, as the Premier has outlined, is to have an export strategy for Asia. There is going to be a huge increase in the middle-class population in Asia that will be looking for our food — looking for protein from Victoria. The budget delivers on making sure those programs are there so that our farmers can be more profitable and there will be more jobs in country Victoria.

Budget: schools

Mr WATT (Burwood) — My question is to the Minister for Education. How does the 2012–13 state budget support improvements in schools and in school maintenance in Victoria?

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for Burwood for his question. His great commitment to education in his electorate has been very effective.

As members know, we have returned Victoria's budget to a far more sustainable level, especially in education. We are making changes in response to Labor's mismanagement of education in this state. We are also delivering on our election commitments and funding the priorities of this government. It is really pleasing to be able to tell the house that, despite the economic pressures that this government and this state are under, we have actually increased the school education budget by 3 per cent. Part of that 3 per cent increase has been a major investment in capital works in Victoria, and a key part of that capital investment is an \$80 million investment in capital projects in country Victoria. What members will see across Victoria is us redressing the problems that were caused by the previous Labor government.

We have money that will be spent at Belvoir Special School in Wodonga and also at Wodonga Senior Secondary College. One of my favourite projects is the \$5 million project for Ouyen P–12 College. Under the previous government that school was promised that if it merged, it would get a brand-new school on one site. The trouble is that the previous government delivered only half of that, and the school remained divided by the Calder Highway. It has taken this government to actually complete that project. The major investment in Belvoir Special School follows on from our biggest investment in special and autistic schools that was in our budget last year.

In Geelong we are investing in the next stage of construction of Northern Bay P–12 College in Corio. In Bendigo we are investing in the next stage of construction of Golden Square Primary School. We are also investing in Boronia. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was praising me in his contribution to the debate on the budget today for completing a project that after 11 years he was unable to complete. There is \$15 million for Boronia K–12 College. In Ballarat we will begin construction on the Phoenix P–12 College, a major project worth \$10 million. Down in Gippsland we are upgrading the Mirboo North Secondary College and Bairnsdale Secondary College — a great school. We are more than halfway through delivering on the capital projects that were part of our election commitments.

We are delivering in Labor's heartland as well, as the Minister for Public Transport has mentioned. We are completing — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr DIXON — We are contributing \$8 million to the upgrade of Laverton P–12 College, which will incorporate the brand-new P–12 Western Autistic School. We are delivering a \$14 million rebuild of the Galvin Park Secondary College in Werribee after the previous government watched that school fall down.

As you are aware, Speaker, maintenance funding was slashed by 20 per cent under the previous government, leaving us with a maintenance backlog of some \$300 million. We are not only increasing the base component of maintenance funding each year by about 48 per cent but are also investing an additional \$20 million to pay for the major priorities that our audit will reveal following 11 years of neglect by the previous government. We are reinvesting in new land for schools as well. The previous government in its last budget allocated \$8 million for land purchases. So far in

just two years this government has invested \$50 million in land purchases. We are delivering that in Cranbourne, we are delivering that in Connewarre —

The SPEAKER — Order! The time for questions has concluded.

APPROPRIATION (2012/2013) BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr MULDER (Minister for Public Transport) — I continue my contribution in relation to the budget and particularly in relation to how it impacts on my portfolio. I have gone through and outlined a whole range of initiatives and policy commitments that we have rolled out right across the state, from metropolitan Melbourne to the suburbs and regional centres and right out into country Victoria.

On top of that, despite the fact that we inherited such an appalling budget position from the former Labor government, we have still been able to add additional services to the metropolitan network. Almost 1000 additional train services have been added since the Baillieu government came to power. It is not as if the former transport minister did not have the opportunity to take up these initiatives. The simple fact is he slid the paper underneath the desk, did not want to talk about it or push it forward and thought it was a political risk to improve public transport in the state. It was left to the coalition government when it came to power to introduce those new services. Not only have we done that, but on the Ringwood, Frankston and Dandenong lines on weekends we are now running trains at 10-minute frequencies. What a great initiative. This paints a vision of where we can take the rail network going forward, and that is to throw away the paper timetable so that people can turn up and know that a train is going to arrive within a matter of minutes.

To that end we have got the new Public Transport Victoria authority, and it has already gone down the path of aligning 140 bus timetables with the train timetables. That is the way it should have been going all along — an integrated public transport network that aligns train, tram and bus timetables.

I can also report to the house that for the month of April it appears that the operator, Metro Trains Melbourne, ran at around 92 per cent punctuality.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (EXAMINATIONS) BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 19 April; motion of Mr McINTOSH (Minister responsible for the establishment of an anti-corruption commission).

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) — I rise to speak on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Examinations) Bill 2012. One of the great tests of true political leadership is integrity — that is, the integrity to be open, honest and accountable and the integrity to keep your political promises. The repetitive theme of the Baillieu government is that it has consistently failed this test, and whilst there is a high degree of competition as to what has been the grandest and most audacious example of its broken election promises, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission must be at least in the finals. It is now almost universally accepted that the establishment of the IBAC has been ham-fisted, secretive, dishonest and incompetent.

This bill is supposedly the last piece in the six-part saga of bills that the government has used to establish the IBAC. These instalments are bad law full of self-serving broken promises, weasel words and tortuous convolutions. We accept that it is challenging to build institutions and we have not tried to stand in the government's way on this difficult journey, but our concern and trepidation grow. This is a body that will require review in terms of its capacity, its effectiveness and its fairness; there is no doubt about it. But there are a number of significant and ongoing issues that concern us, and we will continue to point out the litany of broken election promises by this government on the IBAC.

The government promised that the IBAC would be open for business to conduct investigations by 1 July 2011; it has failed. It promised to deliver an IBAC that was modelled on the New South Wales ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption), and on this promise it has failed. It promised that the IBAC would have a wide jurisdiction to investigate corruption; on this it has failed. It is interesting that the

New South Wales ICAC can investigate matters such as a breach of the ministerial code of conduct. It can investigate allegations such as political preferment — say, for example, when a chief of staff to a senior political leader gets appointed as a trade commissioner in the Americas. The New South Wales ICAC can investigate things like misconduct in public office — say, for example, where a political staffer and in fact a minister may have interfered with or undermined an independent Chief Commissioner of Police.

The government's own policy defines public sector corruption as:

pervverting or attempting to pervvert the proper, honest and impartial exercise of the official functions of a public official.

But the government has delivered nothing of the sort. The government completely fettered the jurisdiction of IBAC in December by significantly heightening the threshold definition of 'corruption', thereby precluding a wide range of matters that the IBAC might have investigated. This bill does nothing to address the public and stakeholder outcry that occurred as a result.

Section 41(2) of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Investigative Functions) Act 2012 in effect says that IBAC will have to make determinations as to whether or not an indictable criminal offence has occurred in order to ascertain whether or not it has jurisdiction to investigate. I would have thought that job, as has been the case traditionally, would be left to the Office of Public Prosecutions and the police.

The threshold for having an inquiry is very high. Even if an inquiry takes place, no-one will necessarily know about it because the government set up a clandestine, secret reporting regime under the previous act despite its pre-election promise that IBAC would report only to the Parliament. When IBAC receives a complaint, it must investigate, refer or dismiss the matter — that is set out in the bill — but it is not obliged to tell anyone, including the complainant, what action it has taken. This bill also sets out a confidentiality regime that can apply to certain persons and documents.

One of the really big commitments the government promised it would deliver was in regard to IBAC having public hearings when it was determined that would be in the public interest, but on this promise it has failed. Government members shouted it from the rooftops before the election. The Premier promised his landmark corruption-busting body would hold public hearings because experts agreed that they were — and I quote the Premier — 'essential for public confidence'. But the Premier has delivered a model in which the

concept of a hearing does not exist. The words 'public hearing' do not exist in form or substance in this bill. There will be no public corruption hearings or inquiries in Victoria despite the government telling Victorians there would be.

It is true that this bill gives IBAC powers to conduct examinations in public — that is, to take evidence in certain circumstances under oath or affirmation — but the presumption in the bill is that an examination be held in private. It provides that an examination, not a hearing or an inquiry, can be held in public but only in very restricted circumstances. That is another broken promise.

I accept that trying to get the balance right in relation to things like public hearings and inquiries is difficult because of genuine issues such as fairness, justice, transparency, confidence, deterrence and the protection of people's reputations. This is a difficult balance, but the government had obviously thought that through before it issued a 37-page document on the issue before the last state election. The government has continued to refuse to engage; it has refused to have a public discussion about this issue. It has suppressed the advisory committee report. It likes to pre-leak its bills and then go missing in action. It has dribbled its IBAC out over six miserable pieces of legislation, and it has taken a year longer than it promised it would. The government has had plenty of opportunity to say, 'We have had a bit of a think about this and have reflected on some of the challenges; we know what we said in opposition and we know this was the hand-on-heart promise we made to Victorians before the election'. Instead we get a backflip, a refusal to acknowledge that backflip, the suppression of all reports, the denial of all freedom of information requests on the matter and a minister who goes into hiding rather than answering any questions about it.

The government promised a broadbased anticorruption commission that would be a one-stop shop, but it has delivered a model that has different rules for different categories of public servants. The judiciary is one group that has different rules and a different model applying to it from those that apply to others. Here is another breach of the government's election commitment. Under the bill different standards will be applied. While a child protection worker, for example, may be publicly examined by IBAC, a judge can never be publicly examined. The bill clarifies that IBAC might be able to retrospectively investigate matters in very rare circumstances.

During the ongoing delay of the introduction of IBAC, which was supposed to be open for business to conduct

investigations on 1 July last year, we have seen a litany of public integrity crises which have all been at the behest of this government. I would hate to think that any of this ongoing delay was designed by the government to try to push the spotlight away from ever being shone on it, because we all know that some of these issues require attention. We all know that the Office of Police Integrity (OPI) said in its *Crossing the Line* report that it could not investigate the Deputy Premier; we know that the version of events of the member for Benambra conflict with those of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in relation to their interventions in law enforcement agencies and the spectacular procurement of the then Chief Commissioner of Police. These retrospectivity provisions have one test — that is, they ought to be capable of enabling the investigations of those issues, because they go to issues involving the confidence in and integrity of law enforcement and the integrity of leadership in this state. If IBAC cannot investigate that kind of conduct, then the government's drafting of this legislation and the legislation itself are clearly retrograde steps.

I will briefly touch on the issue of privilege that the bill addresses. Under the bill, if a witness is summoned by IBAC, then IBAC has the power to compel a person to answer any question or produce any document. This is in addition to the search and seizure powers that were provided in previous legislation. The bill states that in this respect there will be no right to silence nor a right to exercise the privilege against self-incrimination, although there is some derivative immunity powers. But IBAC will bear the burden of contesting a claim of privilege in the Supreme Court. The real issue is that the regime that relates to privilege has the potential effect of prohibiting IBAC from investigating ministers and other high-ranking officers. It will be prohibited not from investigating child protection workers or other good, hardworking public servants but from investigating those who hold the power and have designed the rules. This is not the case for the ICAC in New South Wales. Members should remember that the government promised that the New South Wales ICAC would form a template for the government's model.

This bill recognises certain legal privileges with a couple of exceptions. Crown privileges are abrogated for witnesses who are police personnel. Police personnel cannot rely on any of these privileges; they will always have to give evidence. But guess who can refuse to answer questions and hand over documents? Ministers can, because the bill gives them public interest immunity. Cabinet in confidence is a recognised privilege under public interest immunity. The upshot of this is that many activities of the

executive will be beyond the purview of the IBAC — a demonstration that this government says one thing in opposition but once in government runs and hides.

This abrogation of privilege that may be claimed by the Crown does not extend to any other public officer under the act. It also means the IBAC will have to contend with secrecy requirements in other legislation. An example of that might be section 30 of the Corrections Act 1986, which currently has a specific exemption to allow disclosure to the Ombudsman, among other things — and there are plenty of others.

IBAC will have to deal with claims for public interest immunity, including over cabinet documents and decisions. There is a mechanism for testing the validity of such claims in the Supreme Court, but that will only weed out the baseless claims of privilege and then only after time-consuming and expensive legal proceedings.

While I am on the topic of who gets shielded from investigations by the advocate, I remind the house who will not have a shield. Journalists will have no shield, no privilege, no immunity and no legal capacity to protect themselves from the threat of criminal prosecution and jail if they fail to reveal a source or hand over evidence. It was in April 2011 that the Attorney-General said the shield laws would be introduced into this chamber within six months, yet we have seen nothing. This is an issue that the government needs to address and address quickly, because if these conversations and documents are to be privileged, then this needs to be a matter that is explicitly addressed. It is not.

I note that in Western Australia the Premier, Colin Barnett, has specified that shield laws will apply to its anticorruption machinery. If it is not the government's intention, then it ought to explain what the public policy imperative and the public interest are, on the one hand, in its saying a minister can claim cabinet in confidence as part of the public interest immunity and refuse to answer questions or hand over documents in respect of an alleged corruption inquiry, while on the other hand a journalist who refuses to disclose the identity of, for example, a whistleblower who may be exposing corruption in government gets to go to prison under this bill. A free and independent press is an important check and balance on public integrity and the exposure of corruption. It is important that we do not bite off our nose to spite our face. This balance is wrong, and the government needs to address it.

The bill also establishes classes of protected persons and documents. It renders these completely unreviewable. The bill establishes a regime around

restricted matters. I would like to talk about the confidentiality notices that may prevent a person from revealing a restricted matter with which a witness is likely to be served when they receive a subpoena. There are provisions for disclosing restricted matters for the purposes of obtaining legal advice and telling your employer or a partner, and these are good things; I will affirm that. But they then become subject to the confidentiality notice.

The thing is that a confidentiality notice can be enforced for five years unless it is cancelled or extended. If you know or are told anything, or you are the subject of or you give evidence in an anticorruption inquiry, it is possible that you may be the subject of a confidentiality notice, with the sword of Damocles of a contempt of court action against you held over your head for up to five years.

I think we had better get ready for the new Don Watson book when it comes to anticorruption speak on weasel words, because I can imagine in this chamber when we are in fact asking questions of the government and ministers about whether or not they are the subject of a corruption investigation, particular if they have not been able to rely on a cabinet-in-confidence solution, whether or not they have given evidence or whether or not they are aware of an investigation into alleged corruption, it is conceivable that under this bill no-one will be able to confirm or deny that. Even acknowledging the existence of an inquiry may constitute a breach of the law, and there are significant and severe penalties for that.

There may be circumstances where an IBAC has to protect an investigation; I accept that. I think that is important. We need to remember that this will apply to police corruption and that there may in fact be witnesses who need to be protected. But it is difficult to see why at every turn this government has made everything so secretive. It has failed to come out and engage in any public leadership or any public debate to explain and justify these decisions.

Is it any wonder that every one of the stakeholders that it has worked with has universally condemned its model? I remain concerned that almost every public crack of light into the IBAC's operations has been closed. Let us remember that this is a body that will operate covertly. It will be given access to extraordinary firearms. Who can forget the bazookas announcement? There is a presumption against public examinations being held. There are private reports and private recommendations. There are significant limitations on what may be in the commission's annual report. There are major limitations on what the parliamentary

oversight committee can inquire into. The threshold definition of corruption has been significantly heightened and redefined.

Despite the breach of faith, the government owes it to us to explain how we can be confident that the IBAC is or is not doing its job. The referral powers contained in the bill are also so badly drafted that institutional turf wars, legal uncertainty and failures in institutional accountability are likely to occur under this model. We have seen incredible disputation, albeit put in bureaucratic speak, between the Office of Police Integrity and the Ombudsman's office. That played out particularly in the context of whistleblowers and certain OPI investigations.

The IBAC referral powers do nothing to resolve these issues, even though it was recommended in both of those reports that the government do that. In fact they arguably make them worse. Whilst this bill makes references to transfers, it fails to explicitly identify responsibility and accountability for investigations and decisions except for three provisions in section 49. Providing express legislative power is one thing, but express legislative obligation, responsibility and accountability is required. We have seen report after report tabled in this Parliament in which there have been fundamental failures because a number of agencies have failed to accept responsibility that the buck stopped with them.

Collaboration and cooperation between investigative and law enforcement bodies is one thing, but not when it leads to file tossing between agencies, institutional turf wars or just human confusion about who is doing what and who has an obligation to do what. What we learn again and again from these institutional behaviours, and what we learn from the OPI, the Ombudsman and the litany of reports tabled into agency failure, is that express legislative obligation and accountability must be mandatory.

The bill does not resolve any of those jurisdictional difficulties in respect of integrity and law enforcement bodies. It especially does not resolve them in respect of whistleblowers, and in certain circumstances if a person who is being investigated by the IBAC is a subject of a confidentiality notice, it is conceivable that should the police come to interview them to inquire about a crime they will be prohibited by law from answering the inquiry. We are setting up these bodies to fail. This will introduce an institutional culture of duckshoving between agencies, and as law-makers, we must provide greater clarity and accountability.

Let us not forget that in the last sitting week of Parliament a most disturbing report into the murder of Carl Williams was tabled. Not explicitly mentioned in that report but hanging over things like a shadow there remain a number of significant corruption inquiries involving the police. One of the key performance indicators the government will have to meet here is whether or not — as it has tried to neck the OPI again and again — this body will be capable of carrying the delivery of proper police corruption inquiries rather than setting up a jurisdictional mess that will further hamper an already difficult issue.

In terms of legal representation, I am pleased that the bill sets out circumstances where a person may be represented by an Australian legal practitioner. It is important to note that IBAC has the power to refuse a person permission to have a specific legal practitioner. The only concern the opposition has about these provisions is the limitation that people can be represented only by an Australian lawyer, which diminishes the capacity to be represented by, for example, a union, a professional association, an employer association or, in the case of a councillor, the Municipal Association of Victoria.

The other grand backflip contained in the bill relates to the IBAC commissioner. Is it any wonder that no-one wants to touch this body with a 10-foot barge pole? The government started with the high-order aspiration, over a year and a half ago, of conducting an international search for an IBAC commissioner. It has not been going too well. Initially it reduced the threshold. It said, 'We are not going to fulfil our election promise that the IBAC oversight committee could veto the appointment', thereby tearing up any capacity to have a bipartisan approach to the person's appointment. Instead it said, 'The Premier will consult with the Leader of the Opposition'. Then we had the OPI report in which we found out that the government was making all sorts of employment offers to people like Ken Jones, despite its public denials. Then we got this bill, which says, 'Okay, the minister can just make a recommendation about an acting IBAC commissioner, including the first one. They do not have to satisfy the qualifications of being eligible for appointment to the Supreme Court, Federal Court or County Court, so long as they are a person with investigative experience'. Under this latest provision, therefore, they could appoint Ken Jones.

I understand there are all sorts of rumours that swirl around about people who may or may not be appointed, but the government has done three backflips because no-one wants to be associated with a body that is incompetent and has been so heavily politicised that the

government has not been able to competently legislate for it, given the six pieces of very badly drafted and conflicting legislation that fail to intersect and have been dribbled through the house. It is an absolute shame, because the discretion given to the IBAC commissioner in this and the other five bills is quite wide-ranging. That means that we need a person whose integrity is unimpeachable, hence the value of a bipartisan approach. But the government has trashed that.

Some of us had hoped that in this sixth IBAC bill the legislative saga would start to rectify the inadequacies of the government's model, but it does not. In fact after all these bills and the public outcry about how inadequate they are, the Premier's website still says, about IBAC:

The centrepiece of the coalition's program for government integrity is an independent broadbased anticorruption commission ... lifting Victoria ... to the standard set in other Australian states.

No, the Premier is wrong. IBAC is well below the standard set in other states and well below the standard contained in the coalition's own policy. This can lead us to one of only two conclusions: either the government is stunningly incompetent or the government is less than eager for this organisation to function effectively. On both fronts we hold the government accountable. IBAC is a body that must be able to effectively identify and investigate important corruption matters, and the public deserves some confidence, but again and again the government has denied the public any such confidence.

The greatest threat to public confidence in institutions is the very conduct of this government, the way it has conducted itself. Only when we get a glimpse of public exposure do we get a true insight into how bad things really are. It has chipped away at its own credibility on transparency, accountability and openness ever since it was elected. A good government is capable of building resilient, effective and long-lasting institutions. The year of criticism this IBAC has been subjected to is deserved. I suspect that criticism will continue.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am pleased to rise this afternoon to support the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Examinations) Bill 2012. I must concede that there was an element of originality in the presentation of the member for Altona, unlike the last one on the last subject. However, despite the originality, it was equally fantastic — in the sense of being a complete and utter fantasy — and totally and absolutely unrelated to the facts, to experience and to history.

For 11 years — and I concede that the member for Altona only came in during the dying days of the Brumby government — Labor did absolutely nothing in this space. It had the opportunity, it talked about it, it looked at options and then it did absolutely nothing. Now it wants to sit back, criticise, carp, whinge and carry on — as well as all the other usual verbs and adjectives you think of when you are thinking of the opposition but it did absolutely nothing. In contrast with that position, the coalition is delivering on its commitments. We are delivering the most far-reaching reforms to the integrity systems in this state ever. A series of bills have already been passed, and they certainly are historic.

Ms Hennessy — How many?

Mr MORRIS — I am glad the member for Altona asked that question, because I would have thought she could count, but there have been the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011, the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011, the Public Interest Monitor Act 2011, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Investigative Functions) Act 2012, the Freedom of Information Amendment (Freedom of Information Commissioner) Act 2012 — you may or may not count that — the Victorian Inspectorate Amendment Act 2012 and the commonwealth legislation dealing with telecommunications interception; so in fact there have already been six pieces of legislation dealing with this issue, and there is now the present bill before the house.

There have been seven discrete pieces of legislation implementing reforms to the integrity system in this state — eight if you count the freedom of information amendment. Certainly a substantial body of work has been done by the house. It is about getting the right package together — taking the time and getting it right. It is a measured approach, a staged approach. That is what the government is about: tackling the issue and getting it right. None of us who were around at the time have forgotten the views expressed by the former Premier, John Brumby, who said:

My views on it have been well aired and are well known, and that is that I think ICACs provide a lawyers' picnic.

That was in the *Australian* of 4 June 2010. After years and years of saying, 'No, everything is all right. We do not need it. There is no problem', finally in the shadow of the election Labor developed a proposition. I have referred to it on a number of occasions in these debates but it is equally ridiculous every time you look at it. It was so complex and so bureaucratic and it had so many gaps that you could drive trucks through that it was totally and absolutely unworkable.

If ever a Clayton's proposition were put up, the Victorian integrity and anticorruption commission would be it. To see this you only have to go to what Mark Le Grand, the former Queensland criminal justice commission chief and former national crime authority member, said about that proposed model:

This is not going to work ... It is totally fragmented and it is not built on [a] real appreciation of the challenges Victoria faces.

He went on to say that Labor's model failed to cover all the gaps.

We are in the process of fixing the mess that was left to us by the former government. It is about overhauling what was very much a creaky and almost historic anticorruption system — a system that had undergone a series of patches by Labor, with every patch designed to cover a hole it had not thought of and every patch inadequate. It is a system that is grossly outdated. It is out of touch with practice around the rest of the country. For 11 years Labor did absolutely nothing. It is nothing short of a joke that the lead speaker for the opposition, the member for Altona, came into this house yet again and criticised what is proposed after her colleagues did nothing for 11 years.

I turn to one specific issue that the member for Altona raised — that is, the matter of closed hearings. I draw the attention of the house to the current issues brief on the bill, prepared by the parliamentary library. Page 11 of that document quotes the Law Institute of Victoria as saying in its submission to the review of the integrity and anticorruption system:

... the public interest will usually fall in favour of private hearings —

in order to —

protect the privacy and reputation of witnesses.

That is exactly the system that has been put in place. The default is for a private hearing, but there is the option to have a public hearing.

Ms Hennessy interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Altona!

Mr MORRIS — It is about protecting the interests of witnesses.

Ms Hennessy interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Altona!

Mr MORRIS — It looks like we have a good couple of weeks coming, Deputy Speaker — that is all I can say!

The bill amends the principal act, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011, to provide the powers to conduct examinations for the purposes of investigations and to refer matters to other integrity bodies, as promised. It includes provisions related to the confidentiality regime to which I was just referring. It is also about protecting the confidentiality of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) operations, the dismissal and referral of complaints and notifications to IBAC and the coordination of investigations with other integrity bodies and law enforcement agencies — and that is an important point. Clearly other enforcement agencies play a part in the process. It is about the procedures to be engaged under the examination powers, it is about the privileges and protections available to persons being examined — privileges which have developed over a very long period of time — it is about offences, of course, and it is about the issue of contempt of IBAC.

It is also about the investigation of corrupt conduct that occurred wholly prior to the establishment of the IBAC and conduct that occurs outside Victoria, which I think is also an important issue. It is pointless having an organisation of this nature if you can simply cross the border into New South Wales or South Australia or go across the water to Tasmania, taking a paper bag or engage in some other sort of activity that would not be permitted in this state, and then come back into Victoria. Clearly those matters need to be dealt with as well.

The coalition's election commitment to establish an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission involves a fundamental shift in the Victorian integrity regime, which is exactly what this package of bills seeks to deliver. The bill before us represents the next step in the process of delivering the government's ongoing integrity reforms. It completes the IBAC's suite of investigative and examination powers. I believe this is a historic package of bills. It builds a strong investigatory body that has the teeth it needs to deal with corruption or potential corruption in the state of Victoria. It is an excellent bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Examinations) Bill 2012. In particular I thank the previous speaker, the member for Mornington, for indicating — if I heard him correctly — that there will

be public IBAC hearings. That is something we would like to hear more of from the government, given that it was a commitment made when it started going down the path of the IBAC.

I will touch on a couple of particular issues. Notably, this is the sixth piece of legislation in less than a year relating to the establishment of an IBAC, yet we still have no proclamation date. We are still not clear about when it will be established and whether this is the last piece of legislation that will see it happen. We are also unclear about when the IBAC Commissioner will actually be appointed. Such has been the politicisation of this process by the government that, despite an international search, nobody wants to touch the IBAC. No eminent Victorian or Australian and no international investigator or jurist wants to come anywhere near running this IBAC.

That is a sad indictment of the government that shows what the community and the potential leaders of an IBAC think about how the government has set up the IBAC in not letting it have unfettered access in providing accountability and transparency in administration in Victoria. The government continues to lower the standards around the appointment of an acting IBAC commissioner and to water down the types of people who will actually be able to chair and run the IBAC, and there has been a lack of consultation with the opposition.

There are some matters I want to cover in my contribution that relate to journalists. In particular I make the point to the house that I have been a member of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and its predecessor, the Australian Journalists Association, for some 20 years. In my working life as a journalist I have always upheld and followed the code of ethics of the AJA and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, particularly as it relates to the protection of sources. I say to working journalists here in Victoria and nationally in Australia who may fall foul of this IBAC that they will not have protection under IBAC of any privilege in relation to matters that they may raise on behalf of any sources that choose to hold public officials accountable. They will not have any protection from IBAC under the proposed legislation. There are no shield laws proposed in the legislation put forward by the government. Despite some public comments that have been made by members opposite, journalists are still left with no opportunity to be protected.

We rely on the accountability that is often used by journalists to make sure that injustices come to light and that people, particularly public officials, are held accountable. However, sanctions will now apply to

journalists who do not reveal their sources if they are brought before an IBAC in relation to matters that they raise. These may be matters that are being investigated by IBAC; given that there are no public hearings, we will never know. While I am sure that people in the fraternity that I have worked in as a journalist will make sure that they adhere to the code of ethics, what will happen of course is that potential sources who may have gone to them to shed light and to bring to the public eye concerns around corruption, hypocrisy or injustices that have potentially been committed by public officials will now know that journalists will not be subject to any shield laws and not subject to any protections or privileges.

While journalists I know who are members of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance would adhere to the code of ethics, those sources will know that they cannot take the risk. They will ask themselves whether they can take the risk of choosing to expose wrongdoings, injustices and corruption to journalists, knowing that if it ever became known that they had provided that information, they too would come under the sanction. That leads to a very dangerous situation where whistleblowers and sources who journalists rely on to hold a sense of public accountability will dry up.

We have clearly seen time and again through the Office of Police Integrity that when ministers or public officials have been investigated reports have been tabled here in this Parliament that have outlined in detail corrupt activities, maladministration and corrupt behaviour. They are reported and tabled in this Parliament, made plain for all to see and to be reported on by the media. What opportunities will there be for the media to be able to do that when we will not know who is being investigated and what the outcomes or findings of those investigations are? This is of course if we end up being able to appoint an IBAC commissioner in the first instance.

So I sound strong alarm bells for journalists and their capacity to report without fear or favour, fairly and accurately, and to bring to account corruption, maladministration and injustices through the information that they get from their sources.

As a journalist I wanted not just to shed light on the trials and tribulations of individuals in the community but also to shed light on corrupt practices and wrongdoers in the community, and often you rely on sources to do that. Part of wanting to become a member of Parliament and to be a law-maker is about not just reporting on those injustices, wrongdoings and corrupt practices but actually playing a role as a law-maker in stamping those practices out, standing up for people in

the community and giving them the opportunity to speak out about such practices. What we are doing here is putting a greater level of strain on journalists and their sources in particular. We are saying there is no place and no protection for them when they choose to outline publicly any corrupt practices they believe need to be brought to account.

I do note that ministers continue to be able to refuse to hand over information to the IBAC. Of course they have a public interest immunity which is not available to others. It is something that can only be pierced by the Auditor-General, who can pierce those cabinet-in-confidence arrangements. But of course the IBAC — much touted as it is but still yet to be established and still yet to have an IBAC commissioner — will not be able to pierce that cabinet in confidence, that public interest immunity, when it comes to a range of documents.

It would not surprise me if we start to have cabinet meetings at Storage King or other such places given that they will be the only places where the government will feel confident to conduct its business. It might feel it is at least free there from the views of IBAC and the potential IBAC commissioner, whenever one may be appointed — if we keep lowering the standards enough, that is. Now we see in this bill that anyone with any investigative experience at all could actually be appointed to run the IBAC — perhaps even a dog catcher! That seems to be the direction in which we are heading.

I note that Tasmanian Independent MP Andrew Wilkie has made a number of comments and been an advocate around shield laws for journalists. The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance's *Walkley Magazine* has also made a number of important comments with regard to shield laws. I will just touch on Laurie Oakes and his comments in the recent edition of the *Walkley Magazine*. He said:

The Western Australian government has telegraphed shield legislation going further than the federal law by providing protection for journalists before investigative bodies such as WA's —

Western Australia's —

Corruption and Crime Commission.

That is something that needs to be looked at, particularly given that Laurie Oakes also points out that the New South Wales Crime Commission has issued subpoenas requiring two *Sydney Morning Herald* journalists to hand over phone records, phones and SIM cards and to reveal any direct or indirect communications with the Police Integrity Commission

around its investigations. These are very serious matters we need to address to ensure that we continue to have the opportunity for people to speak out when there are unjust practices.

Mr NEWTON-BROWN (Pahran) — Sadly corruption in this state has been a festering sore for the last 11 years. Former Premier Brumby came up with a proposal prior to the 2010 election to attempt to deal with the problem of corruption in the state, but he was dragged to the table kicking and screaming and the model he came up with excluded sitting members from the harsh spotlight of an IBAC (independent, broadbased anticorruption commission). We were to be protected from that bright light, and instead a new officer to regulate Parliamentary integrity was proposed by Mr Brumby. That officer would keep an eye on us all in this house. At the time the *Age* rightly opined that the proposal was unsatisfactory, and had Mr Brumby won the 2010 election this Parliament would be the only state which did not have an anticorruption body that had the power to look directly into the conduct of politicians.

This is not a new or groundbreaking concept. Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales all have crime-fighting bodies which can launch investigations into politicians without referral, and they are not stopped at the doors of Parliament, as was the plan under Mr Brumby's proposed legislation.

With this bill Victoria will climb on board with these other states and facilitate the investigation of politicians where necessary. You would hope that politicians would sufficiently respect the office they hold, that they would not breach the trust of the Victorian people and that they would appropriately act as role models and be squeaky clean in all of their dealings, but sadly over the last 11 years there have been a number of instances detailed by the media which have shown that some elected representatives are not up to the task of pursuing their occupations in the manner in which the public expects.

Three times I have attempted to comprehensively inform the house of why it is so vitally important that IBAC should have the investigation of politicians within its remit, and each time my contributions on the various IBAC bills have been shut down by spurious, frivolous objections. I notice that the member for Melton has just entered the chamber. He and others have entered the chamber at the commencement of my contribution to shut down that debate.

Before I launch into my fourth attempt at summarising these allegations I will make some pre-emptive

comments in anticipation of further squeals of protest from the other side of the chamber. There are some unsavoury elements within the ranks of the opposition which it would prefer remained buried, but I make the preliminary point that the allegations I seek to detail are not the result of some special investigation but the result of searches which anybody could do on the internet or of documents available in the general public domain.

I will give my first example. A couple of years ago the member for Tarneit was up to his neck in allegations of corruption.

Mr Nardella — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, under standing orders it is inappropriate that an honourable member bring into disrepute or attack other honourable members, and I ask you to bring the member back to the bill. He is referring to the honourable member for Tarneit, and it is inappropriate that he do so.

Dr Napthine — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member who was speaking referred to the member for Tarneit as being involved in allegations of corruption. He has not even said whether the member for Tarneit was making the allegations or was the subject of the allegations. I think it is a bit premature — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I have heard sufficient. I do not uphold the point of order. The member for Pahran to continue — on the bill.

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — It was claimed in media reports at that time that the member for Tarneit had warned the former assistant police commissioner to be careful about what he said to the Police Association boss, Paul Mullett, because he might be under some surveillance. Imagine that. You have a minister of the Crown compromising an investigation of the Victoria Police. At that time the then opposition leader, Ted Baillieu, said on 3AW:

We've been saying it now for years — this is exactly the sort of allegation that should be referred to such a commission.

It should also be noted that at that time Victoria was the only state which did not have an anticorruption commission. Mr Baillieu went on to say:

I would have thought anyone in that situation would be subject to an investigation of significant political corruption and obviously if a case like that was proved then the minister's time would be up.

Yet the Premier at the time, John Brumby, did nothing, despite these allegations that were out there in the public domain.

Moving on, I notice that the member for Essendon is in the chamber, which is appropriate in that the next example I would like to detail to the house concerns the Windsor Hotel. In the past when you thought about the Windsor Hotel you thought about a place where you would take your grandmother for some tea and cakes, but it has now become synonymous with scandal; it has become shorthand for a lack of integrity, corruption within the planning process and the cynical manipulation of the way in which planning works in Victoria.

People remember that the planning processes around the Windsor application were undermined by staff of the then Minister for Planning, the member for Essendon. Perhaps more significantly, people remember the manner in which the then government closed its ranks when these allegations of corruption were detailed in the media. And what about the poor, old junior media adviser, Peta Duke? She was hung out to dry by those opposite. People remember the spin that was used to sell the unsaleable.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Melton on a point of order. Is it the same point of order?

Mr Nardella — No, it is not the same point of order. The bill before the house is a limited bill; it is a bill with specific clauses, and it does not refer to any of these matters. I ask you to bring the honourable member back to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member is referring to matters that are on public record, which I believe he is using as examples of how the bill will be used.

Mr NEWTON-BROWN — Nobody bought that spin. They would remember that the former Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, allegedly committed a serious contempt of Parliament by ordering ministerial advisers not to give evidence to an inquiry. He used his role as Attorney-General to save the skins of the Premier and the planning minister. It is something Victorians will never forget — that when these and other examples of potential corruption were highlighted the Labor Party closed its ranks to protect its own. It refused to instigate any sort of broadbased anticorruption commission that could adequately shine a light on the politicians under investigation. Certainly the Age noted at the time that the politicians had failed

to adequately self-regulate and that something had to be done. What happened was that the Baillieu government was elected with a promise to implement an IBAC, and it is addressing concerns that have been at the forefront of community members' minds for the last 11 years.

Other examples I have detailed in previous speeches include that of the member for Lyndhurst, who was caught misusing his parliamentary entitlements. He used his ministerial driver to take him doorknocking. He took the current member for Narre Warren South with him when he was trying to knock off the previous member for Narre Warren South, Dale Wilson.

Mr Nardella — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, under standing order 118 imputations of improper motives and personal reflections are not permitted. I ask you to bring the honourable member back to the bill and away from personal imputations and reflections.

Dr Napthine — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, this has been a wide-ranging debate. The issue before the house is a matter of some significance. It goes to issues relating to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, the establishment of that commission and the range of activities it may undertake. I think it is well within the bounds of this legislation for members to raise instances in history that are documented or recorded and that may be relevant to this sort of legislation in the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — I rise to address issues of concern in the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Examinations) Bill 2012. My contribution is in the public interest and relates to an interest dear to my heart. Today I call on the Baillieu government to immediately introduce shield laws to provide journalists with greater protection against naming sources. This is a fundamental proposition to ensure free speech and protect democracy. The need is urgent and the stakes are high. Balancing the public interest demands strong shield laws for journalists and their sources to coincide with the introduction of a broadbased anticorruption commission in Victoria. Otherwise investigative journalism will be placed at risk, public interest disclosures jeopardised and robust public debate stifled.

The IBAC (Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission) legislation is deeply concerning, because it does not make any provision for journalists'

privilege. Labor took the leadership position in September 2010 and declared it would no longer wait for a nationally consistent model for journalists' privilege. It announced that Victoria would be the first state to introduce shield laws to provide journalists with greater protection against naming sources in court. At the time Labor urged the commonwealth and other state governments to follow suit. Unfortunately the election result meant the laws were not introduced in Victoria. Nevertheless, more than a year ago the coalition's Attorney-General said that shield laws would be introduced into the Victorian Parliament within the next six months. We are yet to see this legislation, and now such privileges have been omitted from the purview of the IBAC. This is a damning omission that must be fixed in the public interest and as a matter of the utmost priority. Nothing could be more fundamental to the profession of journalism and the basis on which the fourth estate stands.

Journalism was my first career, and I understand the critical importance of protecting sources. I was fortunate enough to twice be honoured with the profession's highest award for excellence, the Walkley award. Both times were for investigative journalism where the protection of sources was vital — in one instance, to disclose a cover-up that ultimately led to charges of murder being laid and, in the other, to expose corrupt behaviour. In both situations sources feared for their lives or that recriminations could jeopardise their careers. They made courageous disclosures in the public interest specifically because they knew their identity would be protected. Otherwise they would have remained silent and the cover-up and corruption would have been maintained. This is the heart of the matter and why shield laws, in conjunction with the introduction of an IBAC in Victoria, are fundamental to the fourth estate — particularly as the IBAC will act covertly, not in public as the Premier promised.

My connection with this Parliament extends back to 1980, when I reported from the media gallery. Michael Harvey was one of my colleagues on the *Herald* newspaper. Later, as a political reporter in Canberra, Harvey and *Herald Sun* colleague Gerard McManus broke a story about veterans entitlements that was clearly in the public interest but embarrassed the Howard government. The reporters refused to identify the source of their article in court and were subsequently fined \$7000 each. Harvey and McManus received criminal convictions for upholding their ethical responsibilities. Journalists should not be treated like criminals for doing their jobs.

For McManus, this led to his being unable to obtain a visa to the United States for a stopover in Hawaii en route to accompany the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the rest of the Canberra press gallery to attend an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Peru. This was an unintended consequence of a conviction that arose from observing the code of ethics, but it hampered McManus's role as a journalist and impacted on his personal life, according to the industry body representing journalists, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA). It underscores my call today for shield laws to be introduced concurrently so consequences such as these are not repeated.

In March 2011, the commonwealth government passed the Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Act 2011. This is a model that this Parliament should look at to see how we could actually deal with the proposition of shield laws for journalists. To quote from the bill's explanatory memorandum:

This is based on the premise that it is vital that journalists can obtain information so they can accurately inform the Australian public about matters of interest. Accordingly, strong protection must be provided to enable the full disclosure of information.

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance strongly supports and advocates for these protections. Indeed the MEAA gave evidence at a hearing of the federal Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee on the basis that the nature of the information and the role of journalists demands such protection. The importance of shield laws was highlighted in the MEAA's 2011 *Press Freedom* report:

The alliance congratulates the authors of the Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Act 2011 and urges state and territory governments to introduce similar legislation in their own jurisdictions. We also commend the West Australian government for its determination to extend journalists' privilege to the Crime and Corruption Commission in Western Australia, and urge all states and territories to follow suit.

Today I call on the coalition government to introduce such laws in Victoria. This is clearly in the public interest, and in the interest of allowing journalists to uphold their professional ethics and do their job. I want to put that clearly on the record today.

I would now like to address the nature of the examinations that IBAC has been empowered to carry out. According to Michael Symons, the head of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales, the body upon which the government promised to base its IBAC:

The private nature of corruption makes it difficult to detect, to investigate and to prosecute. This means investigative agencies have to step outside the normal regime of policing methods. The use of coercive powers in both questioning and the production of documents and other evidence is essential in the investigating of corruption because it tears apart the veil of secrecy that is crucial of corruption to succeed.

How can the Victorian people have faith when a veil of secrecy has been enshrined in the fabric of the government's anticorruption legislation? This bill sets out that when IBAC receives a complaint, it must investigate, refer or dismiss the matter, but IBAC is not obliged to tell anyone, including the complainant, what action has been taken. Further, in contradiction of the Premier's election commitments, this legislation ensures that the majority of IBAC's investigations and examinations will be conducted in secret.

On 20 April this year the *Age* reported —

Dr Napthine — You are not reading, are you?

Mr McGUIRE — I have copious notes; I am quoting directly. The *Age* reported:

Before the 2010 election, Mr Baillieu promised the landmark corruption-busting body would hold public hearings because experts agreed they were 'essential for public confidence'.

That is a critical proposition here. This is the way the Premier himself has defined it — that we need to have public confidence in the hearings and that is why they should be conducted in this way. The article goes on to quote Liberty Victoria president, Professor Spencer Zifcak, who said:

Despite the significant criticism by leading legal figures, the government has decided to proceed with the model tabled at Christmas ... that ought to be of concern to all people wanting to clear up corruption in Victoria.

This quote highlights the supreme irony of this coalition government — a government which was elected promising a new era of transparency and accountability but which has taken office as a rolling public relations machine. The president of Liberty Victoria — an organisation that has worked to promote civil liberties and human rights since 1936 — believes that the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission established by the Liberal-Nationals coalition government 'ought to be of concern to all people wanting to clear up corruption in Victoria'.

There is enough commentary now by leading figures of expert standing within the community for the government to take on board these critiques, to see that the aim here is the public interest and to bring them back in any further legislation that comes before this house. Once again I call today on the government to

bring in shield laws concurrently to cover journalists and to allow them to do their job without being subject to prosecution, and to uphold the public interest.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Examinations) Bill 2012. We can see from clause 1 the clearly set out main purposes of the bill. They are:

- (a) to amend the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 to provide for examination powers, referral powers and other matters relating to the operation of the IBAC; and
- (b) to further amend the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011.

These are the very clear and straightforward purposes within this particular tranche of the IBAC (Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission) legislation. I note that this is another tranche of that legislation, which is very important legislation that the coalition government said it would bring into place, and is in fact bringing into place, here in the state of Victoria through these houses. These are very appropriate mechanisms and safeguards that will be surrounding this particular area that has been of concern for some time to many people residing in Victoria.

It is interesting to reflect on some of the contributions made by those opposite. One of the contributors, the member for Altona, referred to the fact that public hearings are not able to be held when they are deemed to be in the public interest. That is clearly not true. The bill says that public hearings may be held when they are deemed to be in the public interest. It makes you wonder about the level of research that members on the other side have carried out. The member for Altona also went on and essentially made a misleading comment in regard to the material difference between a hearing and an examination. She was really trying to split hairs in relation to that particular aspect contained within the legislation. Clearly there is going to be a provision to hold those sorts of hearings and examinations.

Rather than trying to dwell on some of the key aspects of the bill, the opposition is trying to muddy the waters, if you like, trying to confuse the public as to the reality and the importance of this piece of legislation. They are trying to peddle nonsense that is just going to create confusion in the community. It is interesting that those opposite have chosen to take this view and are trying to cast aspersions on this particular piece of legislation and the overall establishment of IBAC. We can see that the Labor Party has swung from dangerously ignoring all calls for an anticorruption body to now demanding that we have the Spring Street version of the Spanish

Inquisition in relation to what can go on within the parameters of IBAC legislation.

We know that in government Labor refused to do what was right, and in opposition it is clearly misleading the people of Victoria and trying to criticise those who are doing what is right. Contrary to what was said previously by some members opposite, there is nothing in this bill to stop IBAC investigating ministers or their staff. This is very misleading rhetoric from those opposite, who, as I said, are trying to cast aspersions upon this particular piece of legislation.

We can see that there has been a big change of mind among those opposite. They started off wanting to squash all calls for an anticorruption body, and now they want a body that can just focus in on the most minor matters. This particular legislation — this tranche of it and other tranches — enabled the appropriate balance to be set up in relation to what IBAC will and will not investigate. We can see there too that Labor wants the doors thrown open on all of IBAC's activities, despite the fact that no-one appearing before it will have been charged. Again Labor has been out of kilter and completely inappropriate. We on this side have put appropriate parameters in place around those public hearings, because we can see that the view of those opposite is that they want to basically turn it into a spectator sport or circus, ignore those people appearing before IBAC and ignore the fact that they have and should have appropriate protections. As I said, contributions from those opposite in relation to this particular matter have been interesting and quite extraordinary, given what we have heard and given what the bill before this house actually says. There are two quite distinct views there.

I suppose it is unsurprising in a number of ways, given that the previous government had 11 years to do something — 11 years to bring in any sort of appropriate broadbased anticorruption commission — but chose not to. Here we are, within the first year and a bit of the coalition government being elected, and we are delivering on this very far-reaching and fundamental reform to Victoria's integrity system. It is important to reflect on that. We can look back and see what Labor did as a token gesture in relation to these sort of matters. There was the setting up of the OPI, the Office of Police Integrity, and there are a range of legitimate criticisms that can be levelled against that in terms of the damage that was done to people's reputations and that sort of thing, given the way things were sometimes played out in the public domain. That is not the way this government will be operating or dealing with these sorts of matters.

This legislation and the other tranches of the IBAC legislation will be setting up the appropriate parameters for witnesses and those who are the subject of investigations and inquiries that come before it, and it will put an appropriate and robust framework around this whole situation that will enable the appropriate matters to be dealt with as required.

Turning back to the overall objective of the bill, which I want to touch on in a little bit more detail, the bill amends the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 to provide the IBAC with the powers to conduct examinations for the purposes of investigations and to refer matters to other integrity bodies. It also provides for other matters relating to the operation of the IBAC, including the confidentiality of IBAC information and investigations and the coordination of investigations with other agencies. As I said before, it also makes amendments to the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011 to strengthen the role of IBAC's oversight body, the Victorian Inspectorate, and as a result of that it makes consequential amendments to other acts.

In essence that captures the objectives of this piece of legislation, which certainly fleshes out a number of the important areas that need to be dealt with, including confidentiality and the ability to refer matters to other jurisdictions, regulators and so on. I note in passing that division 4, section 49C, deals with the seven other areas where matters can be referred to.

In conclusion, I think it is very important that contributions to this debate be accurate and that rather than running off on emotive matters they look at and bring out the substance of the legislation. I trust that is what my brief contribution has been able to do. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — The bill before the house is all about secrecy; it is all about keeping things that this government has done secret. I just want to make three points in the limited time I have. The government's policy indicated that the anticorruption commission would be up and running by 1 July last year — not this year, not next year, but last year. It has deviated from that policy. The anticorruption commission was supposed to be based on the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption, but it is nothing like that commission.

This is the sixth piece of Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) legislation that has come before the house. The government should have been brighter than this. We have a minister who earns hundreds of thousands of dollars. He should have

just got the New South Wales legislation and brought that in; it could have been passed early last year and IBAC would already be in operation. But we have an incompetent government, an incompetent minister, a government that has no understanding of urgency — —

Mr Newton-Brown interjected.

Mr NARDELLA — And insofar as the member for Prahran goes, just wait until we put in the references — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

COURTS AND SENTENCING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 2 May; motion of Mr CLARK (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

STATUTE LAW REPEALS BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 1 May; motion of Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second reading

Debate resumed from 2 May; motion of Mr WALSH (Minister for Agriculture and Food Security).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Higher education: south-eastern tertiary education provision plan

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. The action I seek is that the minister publicly release the south-eastern tertiary education provision plan and fund the implementation of its recommendations. The secretive manner in which this plan has been developed and the selective release of information about it would be an outrage for any government, but it is particularly outrageous for this government, which came to office promising transparency and accountability but has shrouded its operations in a cloak of secrecy. Only today have we discovered that it is estimated that the true cost of the TAFE cuts in the budget will be around \$290 million per annum by 2013 if the TAFEs cannot grow their businesses. We did not see that announced in this budget from this so-called transparent government.

The south-eastern tertiary education provision plan was commissioned in 2010 by the Labor government. It was developed by a panel led by Professor Kwong Lee Dow and appears to have been finalised some time during

2011, yet that is as much information as is available to the public. Despite the fact that this plan has been developed using the same governance arrangements as those for the Gippsland tertiary education plan, the process for its development has been in stark contrast to that in place for Gippsland.

Both plans were commissioned to find solutions to low tertiary participation and to improve local educational opportunities, but that is where the similarity ends. The Gippsland plan was commissioned in March 2011 by the Minister for Higher Education and Skills — and it relates to his electorate — a year or so after the south-eastern plan. In May 2011 the panel called for written submissions on the Gippsland plan. In August 2011 a discussion paper and terms of reference were released. Throughout August and September 2011 consultations took place and public forums were held, and in January 2012 a final report was released. None of these processes have taken place during development of the south-eastern tertiary education plan. In fact the only people who appear to know much about the plan are Bruce Billson, a member of the federal opposition and the member for Dunkley, and John Ross of the *Australian*, who reported three months ago that the plan was due for release.

Why has the south-eastern plan been sidelined? It is all about priority. If you do not live in the electorate of the minister and the Deputy Premier, you do not seem to get priority. The question is: when will people in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs get a fair go from this government? Why are they treated as second-class citizens? Why did Gippsland residents get vastly preferential treatment compared to hardworking residents of the suburbs? Why is it that a quick scan of the minister's website shows a litany of announcements in the regions but few new initiatives in the suburbs?

As I said, it is all about priorities. It seems that when it comes to this government, participation and attainment in post-secondary education in the south-eastern suburbs, which are at about half the Victorian average, have no priority. It seems to matter little that residents in the suburbs of Frankston, Carrum, Dandenong and Cranbourne and across the Mornington Peninsula desperately need the government to offer them assistance to lift educational attainment. Needing help from this government seems to be secondary to where you live in this state.

Melbourne Fringe Festival: funding

Mr NEWTON-BROWN (Pahran) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. The action I seek is that she

provide funds for the Melbourne Fringe Festival to assist with its marketing and promotion. Melbourne Fringe is the leading organisation for the independent arts in Victoria. It facilitates the presentation of contemporary work across all art forms, and the program the Melbourne Fringe Festival offers gives both emerging and established artists the opportunity to perform and gain diverse professional skills and present new works. The festival showcases the work of primarily independent artists to a broader audience than they may otherwise have, as well as highlighting some of Melbourne's great strengths as a cultural hub within Australia.

The 2012 Melbourne Fringe Festival will be held from 26 September to 14 October. The festival has done a great job of boosting the profile not only of Melbourne but also of many artists in the Melbourne and Victorian arts scene generally. It has also launched the careers of many of our most talented artists and personalities. As the name, the Melbourne Fringe Festival, suggests, the artists tend to be a bit quirky, a bit different and not the normal mainstream artists you would get at some of the more established festivals. It offers a niche showcase for these artists which is greatly valued by the government, and that is why I am asking that the minister provide funds to assist with the promotion of the festival.

By way of quickly reflecting on some research, the Melbourne Fringe Festival attracts a passionate audience generally composed of Melburnians aged between 20 and 40. The research indicates they generally like eating out, going out, going shopping and travelling interstate and that they use Facebook and the internet to stay in touch. This represents a significant proportion of the people in my electorate of Prahran, and this demographic would greatly benefit from an enhanced Melbourne Fringe Festival. There are many venues in Prahran where festival events will play, including Chapel off Chapel, Red Bennies and the David Williamson Theatre.

In conclusion I implore the minister to grant these funds to the festival. They will ensure the continued delivery and development of high-quality shows by our local performers as well as developing and bolstering interstate participation and international marketing of this event.

Public transport: myki call centre

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — Tonight I raise an urgent matter for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that he immediately take steps to ensure that the future myki call centre is set up in Geelong.

This call centre would provide approximately 200 full-time jobs for Geelong people. In recent months community leaders in Geelong, including both the CEO and the mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, were firmly led to believe that the myki call centre contract was to be awarded imminently and that there was a very strong possibility the centre would be established in Geelong. Not only had I been told this, and not only had council chiefs been told this but I am informed by council — and in fact mayor John Mitchell recently told the *Geelong Advertiser* — that the mayor had met with the Minister for Public Transport and local MP David Koch, a member for Western Victoria Region in the Council. Mayor Mitchell in fact told the *Geelong Advertiser* that Mr Koch was supportive of the move — and rightly so, given the possibility of 200 jobs coming to Geelong.

Given these discussions involving the minister, a senior Liberal MP and civic leaders, one would surmise that at the very least there was a possibility the call centre would be coming to Geelong. Further, it was not only local MPs and the CEO and mayor of Geelong who were of the firm opinion there was a high likelihood of the myki centre coming to Geelong, so too was the owner of Steampacket House, where all the infrastructure of a previous call centre is still in place. So encouraged was the owner by the information he was receiving about the new myki call centre that until now he has kept the building vacant, despite a number of overtures from very keen prospective tenants.

Given this background, I have to say I was absolutely shocked and dumbfounded, as was the council, to read in the *Geelong Advertiser* last week that, according to the Transport Ticketing Authority, the call centre was off the table and the relocation opportunity never existed in the first place. That was news to everyone in Geelong who had spent many hours chasing these jobs and, as I said, even getting support from government MPs. In light of this news, and given the cloud that hangs over jobs at Alcoa, the Qantas jobs and the government's own public service jobs in Geelong, I respectfully ask the minister that he take immediate action to get the call centre and the 200 jobs back on the table, because Geelong needs these jobs.

The previous government proactively shifted the Transport Accident Commission and hundreds of jobs to Geelong. I call on the minister to follow suit and get those jobs to Geelong. I can assure the minister that in Geelong we have the people, we have the skills, we have the building and we have the equipment, and we therefore want the jobs. The Minister for Public Transport has the power to ensure that the 200 jobs connected with the myki call centre come to Geelong.

As I just said, what the Bracks government did with the Transport Accident Commission, this government can do with the myki call centre.

I can assure the minister that if he does the right thing by Geelong, I will be the first to support and applaud him. On behalf of the people of Geelong, I plead with the minister to get on the front foot and — —

The SPEAKER — The member's time has expired.

Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre: ministerial visit

Ms MILLER (Bentleigh) — I raise a matter for the attention of the hardworking Minister for Sport and Recreation. The action I seek is that the minister come to the Bentleigh electorate to tour the Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre (GESAC), which is in its final stages of construction. The site was once used as and known to locals as the Bentleigh East Swim Centre. I, like many other locals, spent many a summer at that swimming pool. Like many pools built in the 1960s, over time it began to leak and was in need of repair. Several meetings of those concerned about the future of the pool found that it was structurally, financially and environmentally unsustainable. It was decided that the three levels of government should provide funding to rebuild this sports complex. Whilst at that time a neighbouring location was considered for the new facility, the site on East Boundary Road was assessed to be the most appropriate for such a complex.

GESAC has five swimming pools as well as basketball courts, a gymnasium, a wellness centre, a cafe and numerous other facilities. This state-of-the-art facility will accommodate locals and visitors from neighbouring areas. Unlike the previous Bentleigh East Swim Centre, which was found to be in breach of modern regulations, the new facility meets all the requirements and is safe and easily accessible for all those with a disability. As a keen sports person myself, I, and the entire Baillieu government, place a high importance on the many benefits GESAC will provide. These include health and wellbeing and opportunities to pursue sport and recreation as well as general community participation. Where the previous facility incurred steep ongoing costs for maintenance and repair, the three levels of government are now delivering a well-designed and well-constructed sports and aquatic centre that will be able to be enjoyed safely by all who visit it.

The community of the Bentleigh electorate is a very sporting one. Bentleigh has had many a junior and senior sports champion man or woman. We encourage

participation in sport throughout our community. This wonderful facility has created and will create a lot of jobs for Victorians. That job creation in Bentleigh is very important for the local people and those who live nearby. I call on the Minister for Sport and Recreation to visit Bentleigh to tour the Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre. I look forward to showcasing to him that wonderful sports facility that in the future will be enjoyed by many.

Centre–Bakers roads, Oakleigh South: traffic lights

Mr LIM (Clayton) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads. The action I seek is that the minister kindly include in the VicRoads pedestrian crossing program my proposal for the installation of traffic lights on Centre Road at the corner of Bakers Road in Oakleigh South. Centre Road is a very busy arterial road that runs from Springvale to Brighton and is a major thoroughfare for motorists wishing to drive east to connect with Dandenong Road or west to connect with the Nepean Highway. In recent times traffic on this road has increased considerably, as it has on many arterial roads.

Pedestrian safety is a real concern for local residents but particularly for parents of teenage children who attend South Oakleigh Secondary College, which is located on Bakers Road, and arrive via bus from the east. The nearest bus stop is on the corner of Jacks and Centre roads, some distance from the Bakers and Centre roads intersection, and the students either cross at that point or walk up to the intersection of Bakers and Centre roads and cross there. Centre Road is extremely dangerous for pedestrians to cross, as this section of road between Jacks and Bakers roads has a rise and a speed limit of 60 kilometres per hour. There are no 40-kilometre-per-hour variable flashing speed signs along this section of Centre Road at all. Also, many vehicles turn right into Bakers Road as the next street up, Cameron Avenue, is deemed a no-right-turn road due to this intersection being at the top of another rise in the road and too dangerous to enter. Many accidents occurred before the banning of right turns for vehicles travelling west.

Installing traffic lights would make crossing this busy road safer and reduce the chances of an accident involving a student. I call on the minister to seriously consider this proposal for inclusion in the VicRoads pedestrian crossing program for the sake of all the students at the secondary college.

Small business: Mildura electorate

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. The action I seek is support for businesses that are value adding and manufacturing in my electorate. The Mildura region continues to recover from floods and people in business continue to innovate by expanding value-adding activities and thus creating jobs. I would like to talk about some of those outstanding businesspeople who are seeking some assistance to enable their businesses to expand and employ people.

The first is Manna Farms, a biodynamic and organic citrus, almond and avocado orchard near Mildura that is run by the Keens family, who are meeting the needs of a growing market for biodynamic food.

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mr CRISP — I have had an interjection about free avocados. They live some distance from my place, and I have a family member who grows avocados and who lives much closer to me, from whom I can get them.

Biodynamic food is a growing area of interest in the markets. I know that the Keens family at Manna Farms have been very innovative in their approach to marketing their products. They market their almonds all around the world, and the growth rate has been 10 per cent per annum. They are endeavouring to expand their business and to improve it by putting in packing facilities so that they can do more value-adding on the farm before the product leaves not only the farm but the Mildura region. That too adds jobs and value to our local economy.

Global Rotomoulding is a plastic tank and other product maker located in Irymple. The people there are interested in developing Australia's own underground wastewater treatment system, built to Australian standards, to be marketed as a replacement for the more expensive imports. That project would help that award-winning rotomoulding company to diversify its operations and to have the scope to also market it internationally. Recently when I built a home I put in one of those blackwater recycling systems for the garden. They are very popular — and very expensive! Certainly there is a market for them out there. We may be through the drought, but we know that Australia is the land of droughts and flooding rains and that the drought will be back. That product is an import replacement, which again creates jobs.

I refer also to Zilzie Wines, which has its vineyard located at Karadoc. Zilzie crushes 35 000 to 40 000 tonnes of grapes a year. Believe it or not, there is a winery in the Sunraysia region that is actually interested in taking more grapes. Zilzie too would like to expand and is seeking some assistance so that it can take grapes, value-add and employ people in the Sunraysia region. If these businesses are successful, I know that they will create jobs that can be sustained. I urge the minister to support these initiatives.

Broadmeadows electorate: government services building

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an explanation to his constituents, the people of Broadmeadows and Melbourne's north, as to why the promised, fully budgeted, design-approved and shovel-ready government services building in Broadmeadows has been abandoned and the funding reallocated to other central activities areas throughout the state. The minister has avoided meeting with me regarding the future of this project for Broadmeadows, despite my repeated calls in the Parliament for him to do so. I have written, called and even visited the minister's office in an effort to get answers, but the minister has refused to give me or the people of Broadmeadows an explanation that makes sense on merit, need or good policy grounds.

Now the minister must front up to the people of Broadmeadows, his constituents — the people who elected him as the upper house member to fight for them, for their needs, interests and aspirations in the Parliament and within cabinet. The people of Broadmeadows deserve to know why the coalition government has turned its back on Broadmeadows, repeating the historic failure of generations dating back to the Bolte era.

Despite the fact that this project was funded in the coalition government's first budget, this week in black and white on page 41 of budget paper 4, under 'Central activities areas and strategic sites (statewide)', a note to the table states:

The TIE —

total estimated investment —

has increased by \$14.7 million due to the reallocation of funding from the Broadmeadows government services building project.

This is an absolute disgrace. A government services building in Broadmeadows would attract private investment into the district, act as a catalyst for business development and stimulate economic development. I have repeatedly raised with the coalition the importance of such investments, particularly in my area, which has high unemployment. This is how you build communities so that people are not left feeling isolated and marginalised at the end of the line.

The people of Broadmeadows are crying out for investment in services and the creation of further white-collar career paths. The only possible conclusion to draw is that the Baillieu government is attempting to perfect a reverse Robin Hood — taking money from the poor to give to marginal seats. This is either a ploy to prop up the budget or pork-barrelling for political self-interest. Either way, the government stands condemned. I am therefore calling on the minister to give the people of Broadmeadows a genuine explanation as to why he has failed to deliver and why the Baillieu government has turned its back on the people of Broadmeadows — treating them, again, as the truly forgotten people.

Budget: Ashwood College

Mr WATT (Burwood) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the minister ensure that the Ashwood College capital works be commenced as soon as is practicable. The government has recognised the needs of Ashwood College and the benefits that improved facilities will bring to the school by announcing in this week's budget \$10.5 million for a capital project at the school.

Despite the previous member for Burwood writing to residents on 4 March 2010 to confirm that Ashwood College had been provided for by the then state rebuilding program, no funds were committed by the previous government for capital works at the school. Ashwood College suffered tremendously from an act of arson that devastated a large part of the school's infrastructure and placed a great burden on parents, teachers and, most importantly, the students of the Ashwood community.

In June 2010, following the fire, I wrote to the then education minister, the member for Melbourne, asking for much-needed money for Ashwood College, but still no money was allocated. Since then the coalition government has completed a clean-up following the fire, and that leads us to this point. The second budget of the Baillieu government has delivered \$10.5 million to Ashwood College, fulfilling the election commitment that the coalition made in 2010.

Residents in Burwood will benefit from the \$10.5 million investment for the construction of an administration building, new learning areas and a gymnasium at Ashwood College. This is a significant investment in the infrastructure of Ashwood College, and I am pleased that this has been achieved in what could be considered a very difficult financial environment. I am enthusiastic about the future of this school. This investment will bring to an end the long wait the Ashwood College community has had to endure over many years and will put Ashwood College at the forefront of secondary schooling in the region. This is a great outcome for the local community, and I commend the good work of principal Kerrie Croft, school council president Mariette Tuohey, all the students and the staff, both current staff members and those who have served in the past. They should all be proud of their persistence and their commitment to Ashwood College and its future.

I have already spoken to Kerrie Croft since the announcement was made, and she is of course grateful that these funds have been allocated. I look forward to visiting the school at the earliest possible opportunity to meet with Kerrie and the students and discuss the next step in this important project. I understand the minister's strong commitment to education, and I ask the minister to ensure that the Ashwood College capital works are commenced as soon as is practicable.

Cycling: infrastructure funding

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and it concerns the disgraceful decision to slash \$20 million in funding from a program designed to improve safety for cyclists across the state. The action I seek is that he commit funding to the completion of the link between the Darebin and Yarra trails to ensure that the budget cut does not provide another excuse for the non-completion of this critically important project.

Bridging the gap between the Darebin and Yarra trails was a project that was going full steam ahead prior to the election of the coalition government. In fact there were three local councils — the Darebin, Banyule and Yarra councils — working in partnership with Parks Victoria. They were working assiduously to ensure that this trail was extended and the link was completed. At every stage of the trail's construction funds were allocated by the Labor government to complete the link. Funds were also provided to map the exact route that the link would take between Sparks Reserve and the Yarra trail. Thompson Berrill Landscape Design was halfway through this work when it was told to stop, and

Parks Victoria was informed that it was no longer responsible for the completion of the project. This was very bad news indeed. I have repeatedly called on the minister to reverse that decision, and I do so again today.

We have learnt that \$20 million has been slashed from the budget for another important cycling project. I want to make the point that cyclists make up 14 per cent of all road users, and I understand that there are some 10 000 cyclists who travel every morning during peak hour into the CBD. The bike count that was undertaken Super Tuesday showed that there was a 20 per cent increase in cyclists travelling into the CBD compared to last year. People really want to take up the option of cycling and leave their cars at home, which is great news for all road users. The Darebin trail, the main Yarra trail and in fact all of the trails around my electorate are extremely popular and keep cyclists as safe as possible.

Unfortunately the only group that fails to understand the value of cycling and its increasing popularity is the coalition government. I therefore call on the minister to commit to funding the link to bridge the gap between the Yarra and Darebin trails.

Occupational health and safety: national harmonisation

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — The matter I raise is for the Assistant Treasurer, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips. The action I seek is that he protect Victorians, and in particular the many volunteer organisations across the state, including those in my electorate, from the impact of the federal Labor government's proposed changes to OHS (occupational health and safety) laws.

The commonwealth model work health and safety legislation made a number of changes, including defining volunteers as workers, and the primary duty of care is owed to them in the same way as for paid staff; exemptions for associations that are solely volunteer — that is, no paid staff — however, representatives from Volunteering Victoria have stated in their submission that it is unclear as to when the exemptions will apply, which will leave many organisations unsure as to whether the laws apply to them; and limited exemptions from prosecution duties for association officers and workers who are volunteers, although the full meaning of these exemptions also remains unclear.

The Council of Australian Governments process of harmonising these laws throughout various jurisdictions in Australia is a worthy objective in areas where such

synchronisation is helpful to the community. However, any alignment of laws should only occur where the set of laws being aligned are best practice laws. Harmonisation for the sake of harmonisation is undesirable, particularly where the set of laws to be adopted is of lesser quality than the laws that already exist in one or more jurisdictions. That is the case in relation to the proposal to harmonise OHS laws across Australia, where the commonwealth government seeks to have a set of laws adopted in Victoria which is clearly inferior to Victoria's existing OHS laws and which, if adopted, will have serious negative consequences for Victorians.

The volunteer community in Victoria involves around 120 000 mostly small, unfunded and unresourced organisations. The federal government's changes to OHS laws will essentially treat volunteers as employees, thus threatening many volunteer organisations due to the increased burden placed on them. While they may extend additional protection to some volunteers, they will also substantially increase their responsibilities. The new laws redefine volunteers as workers for health and safety purposes, which means they would then have a duty to do what is reasonably practicable to prevent injury. Breaches those laws can attract large fines, and volunteers could potentially be facing penalties of up to \$300 000. Such a situation would have a twofold negative impact: firstly, it would discourage many volunteers from continuing to volunteer, and thus reduce the number of good citizens willing to give up their time to help others; and secondly, the increased burden on volunteer bodies would increase operating costs and therefore either force cuts to their budgets or, even worse, force an overall closure.

Those connected to Somerville men's shed have expressed concerns about the adoption of these laws in my electorate. They are concerned that these changes will create uncertainty for their volunteers, particularly through increased liability. Furthermore, the changes will require additional resources, thus seriously threatening the longevity of the men's shed. John Drysdale, who facilitates the Somerville men's shed, has stated to me, 'If the proposed changes were introduced, we would simply close down as the risk and the compliance obligations will be simply too onerous'.

The men's shed is a not-for-profit group which provides a vital outreach to men who are retired, disabled, unemployed or — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member's time is up. I apologise to the member, but that is the way it

goes on a Thursday night when we all want to get home.

Responses

Mr RYAN (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — The member for Mildura has raised a matter for my attention involving several issues about businesses in his electorate. This matter is principally about the notion that it is very important, where possible, that the government be able to support private enterprise, particularly from the point of view of increasing our job growth and making certain, therefore, that we can expand the capacity for people to work in various areas across the state. This is even more particularly the case when we deal with areas that have been impacted on by floods. As members of the house know, the Mildura area, and the Sunraysia area more generally, have been heavily hit by floods over the course of the past 12 to 18 months. Flooding has occurred in different instances. I do not need to take members of the house through the details of the various events.

The government established the Victorian Business Flood Recovery Fund; I announced that in May last year. It is a \$10 million fund. The intention behind the fund is to provide assistance to businesses in areas that are located in flood-affected regions. I am pleased to say that in each of the cases to which the member referred this fund will provide and make available a range of assistance that, I hope, will be able to advance the interests of the respective enterprises to which he referred.

The member referred to Global Rotomoulding. I am pleased to see he is not only talking the talk but he is walking the walk — he has installed one of the units produced by this entity. The company is seeking some assistance for the development and manufacture of the only Australian underground wastewater treatment system built to Australian standards and marketed as a replacement for more expensive imports. This is award-winning development. I am pleased to be able to tell the member that although the total cost of the project is about \$300 000, the government will contribute \$50 000 from the fund to assist and invest in the project.

Manna Farms has a project devoted to the establishment of a citrus packing facility dedicated to packing biodynamic and organic citrus products and avocados. I was interested to hear the member's passing observation about avocados. I am pleased to say that we will be contributing \$60 000 from the fund to the total contract of about \$150 000.

Zilzie Wines is a well-known organisation in the region which the member for Mildura proudly represents. The Zilzie winery expansion is a two-stage project that will increase the crushing and production capacity of the winery. The total cost of this very substantial project is \$6.4 million, and we will contribute \$250 000 from the fund to assist.

Seven Fields has a project known as the 'Sunwest packing shed expansion'. This substantial local business is engaging in the expansion of an existing table grape packing facility. As the member has observed, it is wonderful to see that this aspect of the horticultural sector is being engaged through the work and growth of this company. It is so fundamental to the interests of the region. The total project cost is almost \$9 million; as a government we will contribute \$500 000 from the fund.

I strongly endorse these respective forms of assistance, because they are devoted specifically to a region which has taken a big hit from the floods over the course of the past 12 to 18 months. I thank the member for raising those matters with me.

Ms ASHER (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — The member for Prahran has a longstanding interest in events within his electorate, the broader arts community and arts events across the state, because he knows what economic value these events bring to Victoria and indeed to his electorate of Prahran, which is entirely suited to hosting many of these events.

The 2012 Melbourne Fringe Festival will be held from 26 September to 14 October. Whilst many venues are in the Melbourne CBD, a number of events will be held in Prahran, and the member for Prahran articulated the range of venues at which those events will be held.

I am delighted to advise the member for Prahran that the coalition government, through the Tourism Victoria events program, has allocated \$22 500 to assist with interstate promotion of the 2012 festival to increase visitation and the event-related economic yield, and this is on top of Arts Victoria funding of \$343 000 for the event itself.

By way of history, in 2011 festival attendance grew by 25 per cent, with interstate visitors staying on average three to five nights. The 2011 festival also had over 4000 artists participating. As I have mentioned on many occasions, the economic impact of these types of festivals includes significant expenditure directed at the hospitality industry, including accommodation, bars and dining and shopping precincts in and around the city and in the electorate of Prahran.

The funding will aim to increase national awareness of the event and also focus on the Adelaide and Brisbane markets to build on visitation from those states. It will include the Melbourne Fringe Experience competition promoted to the Adelaide and Brisbane markets, print advertising in newspapers in Adelaide and Brisbane, online advertising, distribution of postcards, festival guides, an iPhone application and an online program and ticketing service.

The Melbourne Fringe Festival won the Major Festivals and Events award at the 2011 RACV Victorian Tourism Awards and received a bronze recognition at the national Qantas Australian Tourism Awards in March this year. Speaker, as you are aware and indeed as the member for Prahran is aware, these awards are in recognition of the cultural and economic benefits the event generates for Victoria.

I thank the member for Prahran for his longstanding interest in economic development within Prahran and his support of events overall.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I am pleased to respond to the request made by the member for Bentleigh in relation to the final stages of construction of the Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre (GESAC). She said in her presentation tonight that she had swum at this pool; that would have been good to see. I know that the member is a keen sportsperson and that being a nurse by former trade she knows the benefits of people being healthy and active in their community. I also know, as we all do in this chamber, that the member for Bentleigh is one of the hardest working members and is a proud and passionate supporter of local sporting groups and facilities throughout her electorate, and her constituents are the better for having her as their member in this place.

On 9 October last year I was pleased to visit the Bentleigh electorate with the member and confirm the Victorian coalition government's decision to deliver on its election commitment of \$500 000 to rejuvenate the Julie Cooper pavilion. I remember going out there with the member for Bentleigh; they had a cricket match on. It was a great day to be there with the member for Bentleigh.

The Victorian government acknowledges the important contribution that local sport and recreation infrastructure makes towards promoting healthy lifestyles across the community. As the Minister for Sport and Recreation, like the member for Bentleigh I want to see active and healthy communities. Having been a nurse, the member for Bentleigh knows the importance of that. We also need to have facilities for

those active communities. One of our election commitments included another \$5 million on top of our other grants programs to try to deal with the backlog of community facilities that need fixing.

I am advised that GESAC, which is nearly finished, will include a 50-metre outdoor pool, an indoor 25-metre pool, hydrotherapy, a learn to swim program, leisure water, waterslides, a creche, wellness facilities, a gymnasium and three indoor multipurpose sports courts. I understand that the doors will open soon and that the official opening is not too far off. As the member for Bentleigh has already expressed, she will be there.

I look forward to further advice from the Glen Eira council on the progress of this major project, and I would be pleased to take up the offer given by the member for Bentleigh to visit the new centre in the near future.

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — The member for Burwood raised an issue with me requesting immediate action on the Ashwood College rebuilding program. I must say the member is persistent. Every time I have seen him in some way, shape or form over the last 12 months he has reminded me of the coalition's commitment to funding building works at Ashwood College. He is very pleased that \$10.5 million was provided in this year's budget for that very project.

No sooner has the member for Burwood received that funding than he is once again at me to ensure that construction commences very quickly. I am pleased to tell the member for Burwood that I think that is a worthy aim. I am also pleased to be able to tell the member that our election and capital commitments are commitments we are going to follow through completely. Speaker, you would be aware of that, I am sure. Even though in some cases the money has not been allocated in the budget — it will be allocated in this first term — in just about every case we have already started the early planning processes for all those commitments.

The early work for Ashwood College has commenced. The way we move through that is through master planning. The master plan is based on discussions with the school about the needs of the school, the subjects that the school will be teaching and the specialist facilities required. It will take into account the individual geography of the various school sites. It is an intense period of consultation, and it is well under way at Ashwood. We will then move on to the master plan, the schematics and the detailed design. Once the detailed design is complete we will then draft the tender

documentation. Once that has been completed we will then go out to tender. I am pleased to say that that process has already commenced. It is a very efficient process. The money is there in the budget, so there is nothing to stop that process now.

I commend the member for Burwood for his great representation of Ashwood College. He, like other members of this place, is very keen to see his policy commitments met, which they all will be.

Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections) — The member for Hastings raised a matter for the Assistant Treasurer regarding the protection of Victorians from the harmonisation of occupational health and safety laws, and I will make sure the minister gets that matter.

The member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills asking him to fund the implementation of the south-eastern tertiary education plan.

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mr McINTOSH — He asked him to release that plan. I will pass that on to the relevant minister.

The member for Geelong raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport asking him to step in to ensure that the myki call centre is located in Geelong. I will make sure the minister deals with that matter.

The member for Northcote raised a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change asking him to commit funds to construct a bridge across the Yarra River to connect the Darebin and Yarra cycle trails. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Clayton, who does not appear to be in the house, raised a matter for the Minister for Roads, and I will make sure the minister gets that matter.

Finally, the member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the Minister for Planning seeking an explanation for residents of his electorate regarding why the government services centre will not be built. I will ensure that the Minister for Planning gets that matter.

The SPEAKER — Order! I declare the house adjourned and thank all members for their attendance.

House adjourned 4.45 p.m. until Tuesday, 22 May.